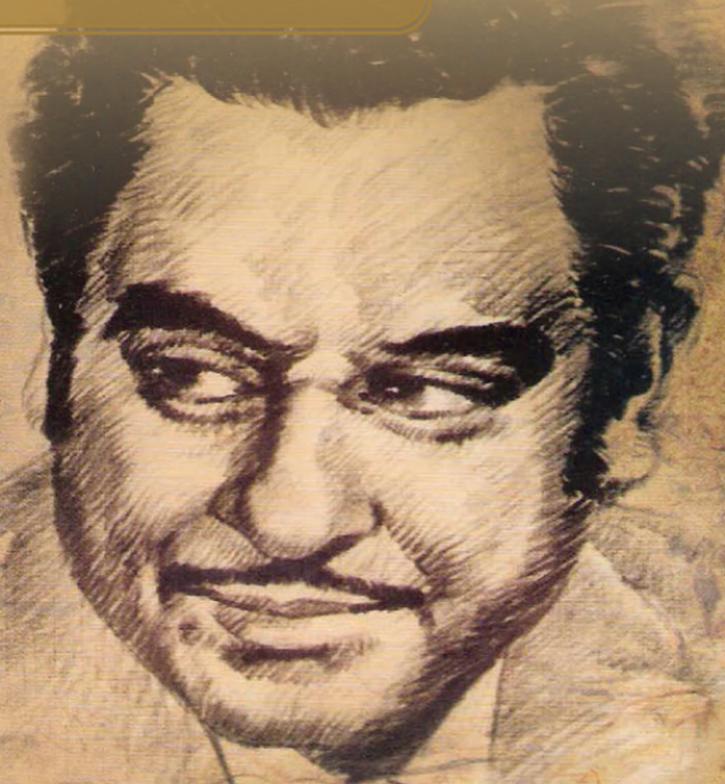


SAMPLE CONTENT



**KISHORE
KUMAR**
A Versatile **Genius**



Shashikant Kinikar

KISHORE
KUMAR
A Versatile **Genius**

Shashikant Kinikar



FOREWORD

In our film universe, Kishore Kumar stands for such a unique multiplicity of talents, images and capacities that he defies any precise or conclusive evaluation. If you fudge him for one thing, he pops up with another. Not only did his voice lend a personality to our highly popular heroes, but he also projected himself as a versatile comedian, tragedian, dancer and singer of a wide variety of songs of different moods and spirits. Equally confounding was his personal life in the profession as well as in love and marriage.

To encompass such an artist within the two covers of a book is a daunting task. But author Shashikant Kinikar has been an expert at the job, having done several graphics of film biographies, directors, actors, singers, composers, over the years. In fact, I always discuss in my friend circle that he ought to qualify for the Limca or Guinness Book of Records for maximum number of such books in Marathi, Hindi

and English. They shed light on what was unknown and stand as a permanent record for posterity.

For this volume, Kinikar must have laboured very hard, doing research, questioning people, digging out facts, to present a life story in narrative form... from struggle to success. There are world-beaters of Kishore's early days in the film industry, when his elder brother Ashok Kumar was already a top star. We remember a small theatre in Deolali, near Nashik, showing "Muqaddar", when we were bowled over by Kishore crooning "Aati hai yaad humko Janwari Farwari." Of course his initial ghosting for Dev Anand in "Ziddi" was a bit shaky but got overshadowed by his playing Dev's romantic guide in "Tamasha".

His singing offer contained top-notch yodelling and he could even belt out a song of taso for villains and negative characters. He did a mock playback for hero Sunil Dutt in the comedy "Padosan", with "Ek chatur naar kar ke singaar". And Kishore could dare to mimic, funnily venerable music director Sachin Dev Burman, with his song "Dhire se jaana bagiyon mein, re bhanwura" in "Chalti Ka Nam Gaadi", while serenading Madhubala.

His serious side had many brooding and tragic songs for himself or other actors, especially Rajesh Khanna his heyday. Another crowning moment of his career came when universally famed Satyajit Ray asked him to sing two Rabindra Sangeet songs for his great masterpiece "Charulata". Moreover, Kishore also sang for some Bengali films, adding to his huge repertoire of Hindi songs, all very ably

chronicled by Kinikar. He also produced Bengali films apart from films of his own company, with his own serious vision.

Like Chaplin, Kishore wanted to be an all-round creator, by scripting, producing, directing, acting, writing lyrics, editing, composing music and singing, though he was pulled down when he declared doing cinematography also. In his day-to-day behaviour, he was known to be eccentric...talking to the trees in his garden, walking away from schedules, making producers run after him, pretending a tummy ache whenever he was not paid fully. His tussles with the Establishment around Emergency period led to the government banning his songs on official media. And the ever-chasing Tax demands sent him to jail briefly. All this led to that superb parody “Pechhe pad gaya Income-Taxum”... a rage in the stage concerts. His choice of life partners from Ruma Deva to Madhubala, Yogita and Leena was almost like a ‘bhul-bhulaiyan’ image.

Indeed, doing justice to Kishore in a book seems a Herculean task. Yet, Kinikar has done the utmost and that is no small achievement.

- **Firoze Rangoonwalla**

Film historian, Author

PREFACE

In the course of my career as a writer, I have had the privilege of being able to record the lives and works of some senior film artistes in my books, most of which were in Marathi - my mother tongue. I have also written books on veteran producer/ director/ actor Guru Dutt, music director Naushad and veteran film actress Nargis in English. I am glad to state here that all my books have been appreciated by the readers, as several editions of the books have already been published.

In the year 2009, to mark the 80th birthday of veteran actor/singer, the late Kishore Kumar, I had the privilege of writing a book on him in Marathi. The response was phenomenal, because up until then, there had been no book on Mr. Kumar recorded in Marathi. But some of my well-wishers and friends, who do not understand Marathi, complained that they were not in a position to understand the contents of

the book and stated that I ought to translate it - either into Hindi or English.

A few years later I found myself discussing this with Shri Anandraoji Limaye of M/s. India Printing Works, who also felt that the English version of the book would attract a large number of readers and he encouraged me to do the needful. However, due to personal reasons, I could not complete the book as fast as I would have liked to. During my hiatus, Shri Limayeji was constantly in touch with me, gently nudging me to complete this work on one of the greatest maestros of all time in Indian cinema. On his insistence, I garnered my efforts and set to work.

While setting about the translation, I found some more interesting information, which has now been added to the English edition. Soon the book came together, and was ready for printing and publishing. The English edition of the book is now being published by Shri Ananadraoji Limaye, on behalf of his Inking Innovations, for which I thank him. I hope that the readers will appreciate my sincere efforts.

Upon my humble request, the famous film historian, Shri Firoze Rangoonwalla was kind enough to spare some of his valuable time to pen the FOREWORD for this book, despite his very busy schedule. My very sincere gratitude for the same.

My thanks also go out to my friends S/S Vishwad Nerurkar, Satish Packnikar and Vishal Bhate, for providing me with rare photographs for my book.

I must also thank Shri Amit Kumar Sahab who provided me with stills from his personal collection.

It is a coincidence that this book is being published exactly five years after its Marathi counterpart, not to mention, on the same day, i.e. 4th August, which is an AUGUST DAY for us all, as it happens to be the birthday of the late veteran, Kishore Kumar.

I sincerely hope this book will bring joy to Kishore Kumar's die-hard fans, as also to people who may have had the opportunity to watch his films, or fancied some of his exuberant tunes. It is sure to give you an insight into the life of the maverick of Indian cinema, for whom there can be no substitute.

Shashikant Kinikar

CONTENTS

- 1 From Aabhas Kumar Ganguli
To Kishore Kumar | 1
- 2 A Star is born | 17
- 3 The Inimitable Singe | 39
- 4 Wedding Nots | 68
- 5 The Vicissitudes of Filmdom | 93
- 6 Up Close and Personal | 116
- 7 Where Angels fear to tread | 128
- 8 The Last Curtain Call | 152



2

A Star is born

Disappointed Kishore Kumar entered filmdom, only because he did not want to dishonor his brother Ashok Kumar, who insisted on him working in SHIKARI. The year was 1946.

About this time, Kishore's elder brother, Kalyan, also came to Mumbai and tried his hand at films. But apart from his blood relation to the reigning superstar Ashok

Kumar, he did not really possess the talent needed to make it as an actor. Despite his best efforts, he could not get a break in films on his own merit for a good few years.

When director Amiya Chakraborty left Bombay Talkies, he directed a film called *GIRLS SCHOOL* (1949). It failed at the box office. After that failure, he began work on *GAUNA*, a film for which he signed Usha Kiran and Wasti in the main leads. At this point he met Kalyan and selected him for a role in the film. While doing so, he thought it prudent to change Kalyan's name to Anoop Kumar.

Although Anoop Kumar was older to Kishore Kumar by three years, he got his break into movies four years after Kishore did. Thus, it came to be, that from the nineteen forties onwards, all three brothers - Ashok, Kishore and Anoop were exhibiting their respective talents on the silver screen.

Right from the year 1935, Ashok Kumar bagged a variety of roles in companies like Bombay Talkies, Filmistan Ltd. and many others. His natural flair for acting and fine performances ensured that he became a very popular actor and was recognised as a Superstar. However, in Kishore's case, it was



not the same. This was mainly because he was never keen on becoming an actor, but was merely using it as a means to earn a livelihood. Therefore he exercised little or no discretion in accepting roles that came his way.

His first role as a hero was in a mythological film by the name of SATI VIJAY (1948). Hardly a film that showcased his talents! However, after working in some unimportant films, he starred in AANDOLAN (1951), which was directed by the then famous director Phani Muzumdar, but that was not the conventional commercial film that the audience were used to. It was a docudrama, which included a large time frame - from ages ago, upto the time of India's freedom. Although AANDOLAN was an important film, Kishore was once more unable to showcase his talent as an actor. Later, his films such as MUKADDAR (1950), CHHAM CHHAMA CHHAM (1952), TAMASHA (1952), FAREB (1953) and LAHAREN (1953), were released, but did not do well. Kishore Kumar's initial foray into films was not very successful.

It was in the year 1953, that a film called LADKI was released. It was produced by the famous South Indian film company, A.V.M. This was the film that gave Kishore the opportunity to showcase his histrionic talent. It was an instant success all over India and Kishore Kumar's name was now pretty much the byword in the film industry. The following year, he acted in Bimal Roy's NAUKARI, where once again, his acting skills merited some serious consideration.

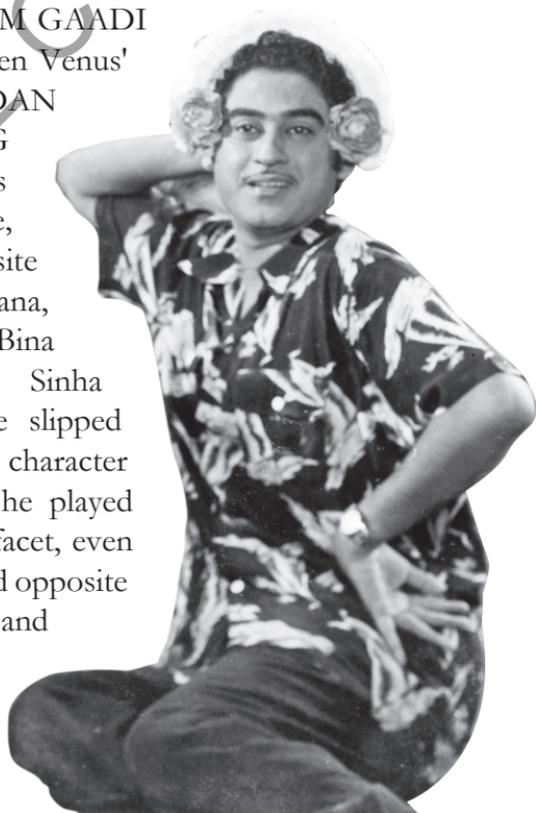
His role in LADKI was a comic one, whereas his persona in NAUKARI was of a very serious nature. But Kishore exhibited his talents in both roles with equal sagacity. Pursuing this, he began to be regarded as an actor par excellence. In RUKHASANA (1955), he played the role of a swashbuckling hero, in BHAGAM BHAG (1956) he played comedy, along with its producer/director/actor Master Bhagwan. These films shot him to instant stardom and he had become a name to reckon with.

But Kishore Kumar abilities as an actor proved to be an undisputed fact when he played a role in the film BHAI BHAI (1956) produced by A.V.M. Ashok Kumar and Kishore Kumar played the role of brothers in that film. It was the first time in both their film careers that they starred together.

The story went like this :- The elder brother is rich, but casting aside his virtuous wife, he gets involved with another woman, who is only interested in his wealth and is aided by her scheming and notorious husband. The younger brother is a lovable scoundrel. But he recognises the ill intentions of the thieving couple, and tries persuading his brother to get back on track by getting him to realize his folly. Eventually when reason regains her throne, the elder brother gets rid of the couple and reunites with his wife. Kishore Kumar played his role effectively. Initially, he appears as a frivolous and vapid character, but as the film progresses, he assumes a sense of propriety and responsibility. He was able to exhibit

both a light and serious turn of character effortlessly and seamlessly, dominating the entire film.

After the runaway success of BHAII BHAII, Kishore's popularity soared even further at the box office and he became a name that undoubtedly sold films. Many important film producers began queuing up to sign films with him and top ranking heroines vied with each other to star opposite him. In ILZAM (1954), NAYA ANDAZ (1956) & MISS MARY (1957), Meena Kumari worked with him as his heroine, whereas Vijayantimala was his heroine in MISS MALA, PAHELI JHALAK (1954), NEW DELHI (1956) and ASHA (1957). In BEGUNAH (1957), Shakila worked with him and in CHALTI KA NAAM GAADI (1958), there was 'Screen Venus' Madhubala. In CHANDAN and DILLI KA THUG (both 1958), there was Nutan. Besides these, he also starred opposite heroines like Sadhana, Nirupa Roy, Tanuja, Bina Roy, Padmini, Mala Sinha and many others. He slipped effortlessly into the character required in the roles he played and covered its every facet, even though he often worked opposite more experienced and versatile actresses.



Kishore was a fan of the famous Hollywood comedian Danny Kaye. However, he had no intention of imitating Danny's style of acting. If one looks at a few of Danny's famous films such as *KNOCK ON WOOD*, *MERRY ANDREW* and *THE INSPECTOR GENERAL*, one would not find any similarity in their acting styles. In the film *THE INSPECTOR GENERAL*, there was a scene where Danny Kaye fools around while having dinner. A similar shot was seen in *JAAL SAAZ* (1959). Danny performed the shot in his own trademark style, whereas though Kishore used the same scene, he performed it in his own peculiar style.

BEGUNAH (1957) was banned for screening after its release because the producer of *KNOCK ON WOOD* filed a suit against the producer of *BEGUNAH*, stating that the film had been plagiarised. The court ordered the removal of all the



prints in circulation and had them destroyed, along with its original negative. However, as far as acting was concerned, the reviews that appeared in the periodicals did not comment that Kishore Kumar adopted Danny Kaye's style of acting. Danny was Danny and Kishore was Kishore! Both of them had their own singular style.

While commenting on Kishore Kumar's acting style, famous lyricist and director, Gulzar once said-

"It was probably the year 1968. I was working as the chief assistant to director Debu Sen, who was directing a film called DO DOONI CHAR for Bimal Roy Production. The work assigned to me was to explain to each artist which scene was to be shot and its importance. Explaining such things to artists like Kishore Kumar was a very tough task. Kishore mischievous attitude and prank would tend to make things even more complicated. He would seemingly be listening to me narrating the entire scene, after which he would say, 'I did not understand anything that you said. Show me how to enact the scene.' This approach of his would put me in a quandary..... Can anyone enact a scene written with Kishore Kumar in mind?! Even seasoned artists would find it difficult to do this job. So what about me? But it was quite common for him to resort to these pranks on the set!"

Kishore Kumar was unpredictable. If he was determined not to do something, but was being pressurized to do it, he would devise ingenious ways to get 'out'. Hrishikesh Mukherjee wrote his famous film ANAND (1970), keeping Kishore in mind for the lead of the same name. But Kishore had misgivings about the last scene of the film, in which the hero dies of

cancer. Time and again, Kishore discussed his qualms about the scene with Hrishida. But Hrishida was equally adamant that there would be no change, and insisted Kishore portray the role as originally written. Kishore finally accepted the status quo and landed up on the set for the first day of shooting. Hrishida was aghast at his appearance, for Kishore had completely shaved his head and petulantly informed Hrishikesh that he was now ready to begin shooting. Hrishikesh Mukherji cancelled the shooting for the day and later changed the hero. The role was offered to Rajesh Khanna.

This was Kishore Kumar! About his acting, Hrishikesh Mukherjee once said-

"You cannot compel Kishore to 'do' acting. If you do so, you will not get the desired results. If you want him to act, but if his heart is not in it, it will show in his acting. It may even be counterproductive. If you praise him for his good qualities, make him mindful of his ability and give him liberty, he is wonderful."

Ashok Kumar, Kishore Kumar and Anoop Kumar starred together for the first time in BANDI (1957), which was directed by Satyen Bose. Both Ashok and Kishore Kumar portrayed the roles of brothers in the film. Ashok Kumar's role was that of a rich landlord and Kishore, a poor villager, who managed to eke out a living to meet his daily requirements by managing a small hotel. However, in the same village, there lived a farmer of small means, who cultivated the land in order to earn his livelihood. The Zamindar, aka the landlord, intends to grab the land, but the small farmer

is unwilling to sell it. The crafty Zamindar orders his servants to kidnap the unsuspecting farmer. The farmer now muzzled and forced to lie down, is at the mercy of the Zamindar, whose sole intention is to kill him by thrusting a sword through his stomach. The farmer is unable to move or speak, trussed and gagged as he is and is writhing in agony. The Zamindar takes the sword in his hands and approaches him. He raises it, about to thrust it into the farmer's stomach, when the poor fellow manages to extricate himself from the hand over his mouth painfully uttering the word "Bhaiyya" (brother). The Zamindar realizes that his servants have mistakenly captured his own brother, instead of the farmer, who, because of the similarity in gait, attire and other mannerisms, resembled the farmer. Of course, the blunder comes to light only when Kishore manages to extricate himself enough to utter the word "Bhaiyya. "



While enacting this scene, Kishore Kumar was at his best. The manner in which he struggles to save himself and his strenuous efforts to free his mouth from the servant's hands is a masterpiece of his acting abilities. So effectively is he able to render his emotions through his eyes, that the audience were

drawn in, completely able to sympathise with his plight.

At the start of the film BANDI, Kishore Kumar is seen in peculiar Bengali attire. He wears a dhoti, a dirty coat and has disorderly grey hair and is seen in a small hotel, speaking to the villagers in their colloquial dialect. He is portrayed as a jocular individual, full of jokes and larks, but he is also portrayed in a serious moment when, unable to provide milk for his child, he sings the child to sleep on his lap all through the night.

*"Chup hoja ameroonki ye sone ki ghadi hai,
Tere liye rone ko babut umar badi hai."*

(Don't cry, this is the time for the rich to sleep, You have a long life to cry later.)

The audiences were rendered quite emotional during this scene.

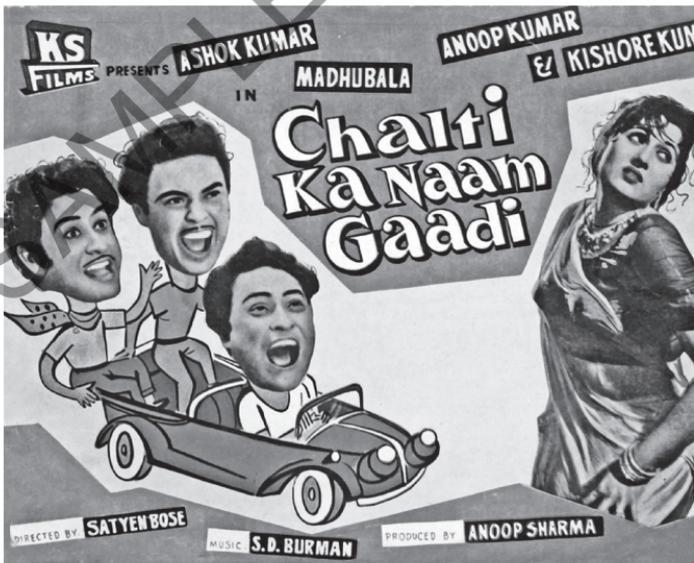
If anyone was to extract the best out of Kishore Kumar, they had to understand that Kishore felt he required to be one with the scene that was being picturized.. "Unless I am inspired and get into the right mood, I cannot do justice to any scene," was his opinion on how he connected with his films. But to bring him into that particular mood, the director and other co-artists had often to wait for a good many hours. Cast and crew often grew bored while waiting for shooting to commence. Sensing the restless atmosphere and boredom, Kishore would resort to jokes to make them laugh. This would often be the



catalyst to the frame of mind he was seeking and would result in him rendering a perfect shot.

At times, he was known to act spontaneously during a shot, without consulting any of the crew. This often confused his co-stars, who were put on the spot in such situations, unsure how to react. But when any shot was okayed by the directors, its impact was much more effective than was anticipated by them. This was probably why other stars clamoured to work with Kishore Kumar, despite all his seemingly erratic behaviour!

In 1958, Kishore produced a suspense comedy film named 'CHALTI KA NAAM GAADI'. He had already displayed his eclectic talent, portraying various comedy and serious roles earlier. But in this film, he stood out, showing a different and unique dimension



to his acting skills. Then onwards, he was regarded as an 'A grade' film artist.

The story of the film revolves around three brothers whose names are Brij Mohan, Man Mohan and Jag Mohan, portrayed by the real brothers Ashok Kumar, Kishore Kumar and Anoop Kumar respectively. The eldest brother, Brij Mohan, was a boxing champion while in college, and his fiancée rejects him when she finds a rich man to marry her. Henceforth, Brij Mohan seems to have misogynistic tendencies and advises his younger brothers to stay away from women.

Now Brij Mohan runs a garage workshop, repairing cars and all three brothers are gainfully employed here. One day, Mannu (Man Mohan's favourite name) is asked to look after the workshop.

That rainy night, while he is fast asleep, there is a knock at the door. Mannu opens the shutters to find a young and beautiful, but completely drenched young lady on the doorstep. Her car has broken down and needed repairs, but Mannu advises her to return the next morning. The persistent young lady implores him to repair her car, to which he eventually complies and she drives off, forgetting to pay for the service. In fact she is in such a hurry, she leaves her purse behind. Mannu opens it to find a ticket for a dance programme amongst the usual ladies paraphernalia. The next day, Mannu narrates this incident to Brij, who promptly despatches him to the theatre to collect the money due to them for servicing the car. Mannu arrives at the theatre, but is unable to get admission in.

Kishore Kumar stands for such a unique multiplicity of talents, images and capacities that he defies any precise or conclusive evaluation. Not only did his voice lend a personality to our highly popular heroes, but he also projected himself as a versatile comedian, tragedian, dancer and singer of a wide variety of songs of different moods and spirit. Equally confounding was his personal life in his profession as well as in love and marriage.

Kinikar must have laboured very hard, doing research, questioning people, digging out facts, to present Kishore Kumar's life story in narrative form...from struggle to success. It sheds light on what was unknown and stands as a record for posterity.

Indeed, doing justice to Kishore in a book seems a Herculean task. Yet, Kinikar has done the utmost and that is no small achievement.



BUY NOW