

# cinema



\* Actor and filmmaker Dev Anand salutes supporters after receiving the Dadasaheb Phalke award from then-president A P J Abdul Kalam for his outstanding contribution to Indian cinema, during a ceremony in New Delhi on December 29, 2003.

## The man who never knew winter

Gautaman Bhaskaran remembers

the inimitable Dev Anand

**D**ev Anand was probably the most stylish man in Indian cinema. His hair combed into a seductive quiff — which many including me tried to copy — his scarf that he threw around his neck in almost careless abandon, his hats and his impeccably tailored clothes made him such a dashing and debonair guy that women just flipped for him. He was tall, fair and killingly handsome. He was educated, refined, cultured, polite and a gentleman par excellence.

Dev Anand's optimism never knew winter. He lived in eternal spring. Failure never frightened him.

He was never rattled by rancour or remorse. Film may come and film may go, and movie may fly and movie may crash. Dev Anand smiled for ever. When bouquets came, he hugged them. When brickbats flew, he ducked, and beamed.

His courage of conviction, his oodles of optimism, and his unfaltering faith in himself egged him to push on with the cinema he believed in. Not what the world wanted. I wonder whether he and his production house, Navketan, ever made a movie for the masses. They created it for their own joy, for their own divine discoveries.

Zeenat Aman, Tina Munim (who later

became an Ambani) and many more damsels he ran into in the strangest of places and among the strangest of people, walked into his cinema and often into his life.

Dev Anand could have been in love with a million women, but he never spoke or bragged about them (until he wrote his autobiography, *Romancing With Life*, in 2007). He respected his women, loved, adored and worshipped them. Suraiya was one he met on a film set. She was already a star, he a struggling newcomer, but when Dev saved her after the boat in which they were shooting capsized, cupid struck. But they could not marry, because Suraiya's grandmother said no.

While Suraiya remained single till her death in 2004, Dev went on to marry Kalpana Kartik or Mona Singh whom he saw while he was shooting *Taxi Driver*.

Strangely, Kalpana has always remained in the shadows. I have never seen them together. Was Dev afraid that if he were to flaunt his wife or marital status, women would stop flirting with or falling for him? He was, of course, candid enough to admit that he had been in love with many women, including Zeenat Aman, who played his sister in the cult movie about hippies and drugs, *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*. I suppose some aspects of Dev's life would never be known. For, all his openness, he had a secretive side to him that nobody could or dared to probe.

As much as Dev was an iconic star, he was never an actor. He was all style, but no substance. Whether it was in his early *Baazi* as gambler Madan or architect Rakesh in *Tere Ghar Ke Samne* or Raju in R K Narayan's *Guide* or as Dr Anand Kumar in *Tere Mere Sapne* (based on A J Cronin's *The Citadel*) or Vinay in *Jewel Thief* or Heera in *Heera Panna*, he was just Dev Anand. He never made an attempt to get into a character; he probably never cared about this, firmly believing that men and women in particular wanted to see Dev Anand, not Raju or Vinay.

But, in all fairness to Dev, who died on Saturday in London, where he had gone with a medical problem, he never claimed to be an actor.

He never even said he was a showman — as Raj Kapoor averred. Dev's closest rival, if there was at all one, was Shammi Kapoor. But Kapoor was a Junglee, a Janwar, a Bluff Master, a Professor, a Brahmachari and a Rajkumar.

Dev Anand was none of these. None at all. He was just Dev Anand.

Also, while contemporary Dilip Kumar drowned in sorrow, and tempted tragedy in many of his movies, Dev threw rings of joy that women caught in glee and giggled. In fact, during his first meeting with Suraiya, she merely laughed, with Dev counting the number of times she did that.

Dev believed in being happy, in spreading the smile of sunshine, in running (not walking), in falling in love (so what if you have to fall out of it) and in sweeping women off their feet.

He copied Hollywood actor Gregory Peck's mannerisms (the way he walked and the way he talked) only because Suraiya loved that guy. These became an integral part of the Dev persona, the singsong way he delivered his dialogues, the way he tilted his head...

Above all, Dev loved what he did. He was passionate about making cinema. He acted, directed and produced, his last



being *Chargesheet* which hit the theatres in September. His mind was so agile that it would not let his body slow down. He was so full of energy that it kept his spirit soaring. He never drank, and was a vegetarian and such a disciplinarian that his physique moved at the slightest of his commands.

Yes, I caught the wrinkles on his face as time went by, but I never ceased to see or feel the glimmer in his eyes, the excitement in his voice and the restlessness in him.

For, Dev Anand never said die, and I can still hear him answering my phone call. "This is Dev Anand...Who is calling please?" His tone was always warm, there was a gentleness in it, and there was something mesmerizing about it.

Dev Anand, but how could he die?

(Gautaman Bhaskaran may be contacted at [gautamanbhaskaran@yahoo.in](mailto:gautamanbhaskaran@yahoo.in))