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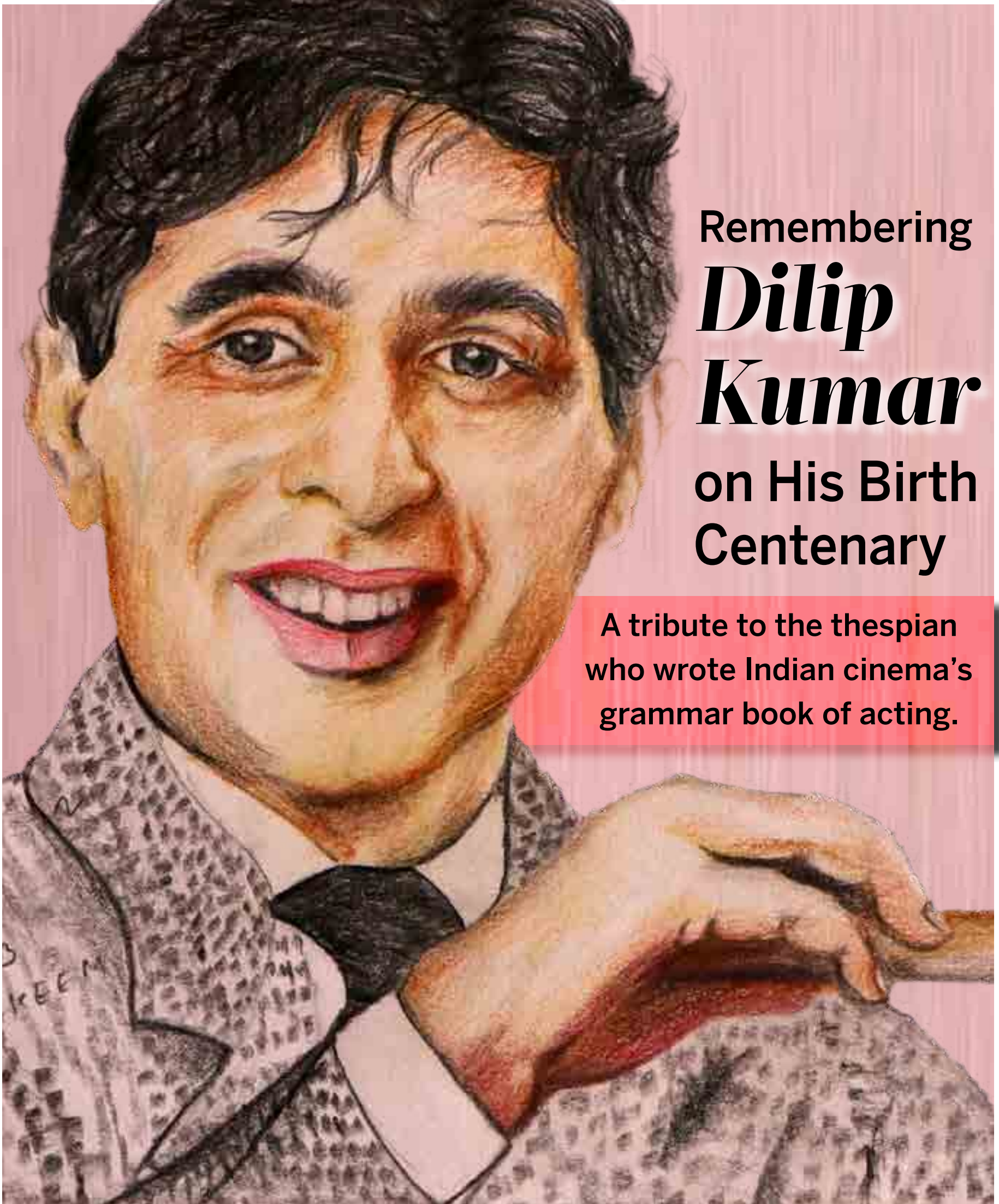
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expression unleashed



Remembering *Dilip Kumar* on His Birth Centenary

A tribute to the thespian
who wrote Indian cinema's
grammar book of acting.

Healthcare Emergency

A foggy start to winter should already have set the alarm bells ringing in Kashmir. Most part of the day these days is clouded by fog and the night temperatures are sliding below freezing levels. Yet, there is no sense of alarm found in Kashmir's healthcare system.

The winter is the harshest period to live in Kashmir. It impacts physical as well as mental health of the people. The shorter, gloomy days are known to worsen the already fragile mental health of many, while the freezing days and nights harm the respiratory health.

While it is still the beginning of the winter and the core period is yet to begin as it traditionally begins with the solstice on December 21 which in the local parlance is referred to as *chilai kalan*, the indicators for the coming days are not good. If the weather pattern continues the way it is, we may be faced with a severely troubling winter.

In such a scenario, the administration should have worked preemptively to announce a medical emergency across Kashmir as the number of cases of the patients from susceptible groups – like children and elderly – will drastically grow in the region.

A medical emergency would have meant a heightened state of alertness and preparedness. The four hospitals that are likely to register a significant patient inflow in the coming days and weeks include SKIMS, SMHS, Pediatric Hospital and the CD Hospital.

These four major hospitals are likely to record a significant patient turnout as the situation of those with heart ailments, respiratory illnesses and weak immunity – mainly children and elderly but also young people – may worsen due to the harshly inclement weather.

However, the unpreparedness in these hospi-

There is a need to think innovatively and go the extra mile. The construction of concrete coliseums does not mean the healthcare system has been upgraded. The healthcare system means trained and experienced doctors and paramedics.

tals is for everyone to see. Take, for example, the Chest Disease Hospital where, as recently as December 1, the internal heating system that would keep the wards warm was shut during the night and restarted in the morning. During the coldest hours of the night, the patients most susceptible to cold can't be put through a more harsh treatment.

The newly constructed pediatric hospital on Srinagar's outskirts at Bemina is another example of gross mismanagement. The number of

night shift duties at the Emergency ward of SMHS hospital refused to treat a patient after one of the young doctors accused her attendant of misbehaving with him.

The angry young doctor flung her card away and refused to give her the treatment. Other young and angry doctors, at least two of them, joined the ruckus and forced the female patient to leave without being treated. This is where the senior, experienced doctors could have come in. The absence of senior and experienced doctors at

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people waiting in the queue at the OPDs is horrifying while there are two doctors attending to ill children. The scenes at the pediatric hospital look more like a famine-hit region where people queue up for packets of food.

While it is a known fact that hospitals in Kashmir are badly understaffed and there is a need for more doctors, there have been little remedial measures put in place. Almost all hospitals in Kashmir lack an appropriate strength of doctors. The World Health Organisation has recommended the doctor-patient ratio at one doctor for every thousand patients while Kashmir struggles at 1:2000.

The other immediate need is involving senior doctors on night duty. At night, all major hospitals are staffed by internees, who are still studying their masters. While they may be competent within their age group and may be able to administer the first-aid medicines, they usually shift the patients to daytime hours which further increases the rush at the hospitals and burdens the already overburdened system.

There is another catch to young doctors tasked with the long nighttime duty hours. With a lack of experience, they are also ill-prepared to handle tense and panicky attendants. As recently as last week, a group of MD students attending

nights is severely hampering the healthcare services in Kashmir.

With the winter becoming increasingly severe each passing day, the administration should have geared up by now. Instead there seems to be no urgency or initiative – neither from the bureaucracy nor from the hospital administration – to streamline the healthcare system and gear up for the winter.

There is a need to think innovatively and go the extra mile. The construction of concrete coliseums does not mean the healthcare system has been upgraded. The healthcare system means trained and experienced doctors and paramedics.

It is also incumbent upon the hospital administration to train the young and inexperienced doctors in such a way that they are able to handle unpleasant situations without turning into rowdies. A doctor refusing to treat a patient isn't a good.

Also, leaving such young and angry doctors to attend the emergency wards by themselves without the presence and oversight of senior and experienced doctors is gross negligence.

There is a need to change and evolve. Unfortunately, Kashmir's healthcare system lacks both – a will to change and a will to evolve. And that, needless to say, isn't a good prognosis.

MARIYA DAR

Essentially, all life depends upon the soil. There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together.

—Charles E. Kellogg, *USDA Year-book of Agriculture*, 1938

Soil is fundamental to the existence of life and it has often been referred to as a dynamic living entity as it acts as digestive system by decomposing and recycling the majority of the materials that are added to it, making them accessible for new life. Soil, a naturally occurring body, is a mixture that contains minerals, organic matter and living organisms. It serves as a natural medium for plant development, means of water and nutrient storage and a habitat for a wide range of organisms. Soil is a source of nutrients that are required by the plant for its optimal growth. Moreover, soil provides a conducive environment for the proliferation of microbes.

World Soil Day is celebrated on the 5th of December with different themes each year to spread awareness among the masses about the importance of soil and its overall health. Each year, various campaigns focus on bringing attention to different aspects of soil conservation. This year's theme is: 'Soil, where food begins'.

It wouldn't be wrong for us to say that life cannot exist without soil. Soil, despite being an important resource, is highly neglected and underrated. The productivity of agricultural soils has been declining globally in recent years. To satiate our need of growing more food, the soil has been exploited to the point that now it has started affecting plant and animal health. Due to intensive farming practices, excessive nutrient and pesticide use by crops, and a lack of replenishment from organic sources, the soil is beginning to show signs of weariness.

Soils vary in properties, and these varied characteristics influence its natural abilities to support life and maintain environmental quality. The inherent properties of soil can be realized by assessing its health. Soil health is indicative of its capacity to function in such a way as to sustain and support soil fauna and flora, maintain soil quality and promote plant and animal health. Thus, the soil becomes an essential resource for human survival.

A healthy soil:

- ➔ Provides a medium for healthy plant growth.
- ➔ Retains and supplies essential plant nutrients.
- ➔ Stores water for plants and helps transport nutrients to the root system.
- ➔ Supports and maintains a diverse microbial population.
- ➔ Has a balanced pH.
- ➔ Acts as an environmental buffer.
- ➔ Sequesters heavy metals.
- ➔ Assists in pest and disease suppression.

A set range of characteristics cannot be assigned to healthy soil as soil health characteristics vary with different crops

and locations. The exact soil composition i.e., mineral matter, organic matter, microbial population and water content varies from place to place making the relative evaluation necessary.

Soil health covers all physical, chemical, and biological characteristics, hence, a more holistic approach as compared to just the fertility aspect. Soil health indicates the capacity of the soil to function in a way to sustain and support soil microbes, maintain soil quality, and promote plant and animal health. The only way to determine the soil health status is by getting our soils tested and matching these soil characteristics with the crop requirement.

Healthy soil ensures good quality produce and a healthy crop stand by providing favorable conditions. It increases the capacity of crops to withstand weather variability and stress conditions like drought. An unhealthy soil will not ensure an optimal supply of essential plant nutrients which in turn will hamper crop growth and ultimately decrease our yield.

As per the government reports, India's degraded land expanded to 97.84 million hectares in 2018-19, up from 96.32 million hectares in 2011-13. According to The World Bank report, the fertilizer consumption in India is about 209.4 kg/hectare of arable land. The NPK fertilizer consumption in the year 2020 was recorded to be 127.790 kg/ha which increased to 137.150 kg/ha in the year 2021. The values suggest that there has been an indiscriminate use of fertilizers to increase production, but what we don't realize is that this is only going to leave the land degraded and lead to its compaction. An integrated approach to land management thus needs to be adopted to conserve soil health while improving the quality as well as the quantity of our produce. The integrated system of soil management is based on using organic fertilizers in combination with inorganic ones. This system recommends that the inorganic chemicals should be used strategically, preferably in split doses along with the organic manures.

In Jammu and Kashmir, since 1972, more than 800 km² of agricultural land have been transformed into horticultural and residential areas. Turning land into orchards means increased use of chemicals like pesticides, insecticides, and fertilizers, thereby adding up more chemical residues to the soil. The land conversion should only be done while keeping into consideration its capability and suitability. To maintain a balance among various land use and land cover types in the state, the government must develop and administer an appropriate land use policy. The wrong choice of plants, bad farming practices, imbalance in the application of fertilizer, lack of suitable planting patterns and the choice of land use to harness maximum

potential of the farmers' resources have all had a substantial influence on the efficiency of land resources.

Over the years, we have added enormous amounts of inorganic fertilizers to our soils, rendering them unproductive. Overuse of fertilizers affects various soil chemical and physical parameters negatively and can lead to a decline in the soil microbe population.

In recent years, the idea of land-based holistic development has evolved as one of the promising alternatives to increasing agricultural output and sustainability. Any economically and environmentally sound agricultural system requires healthy soil. Sustainable and efficient crop and soil management systems can only be designed by having a proper understanding of various soil processes and the effects of management practices on them. Based on our management practices, soil health can either improve or degrade further. Soil's physical, chemical and biological characteristics are highly affected by how it's managed. A healthy soil provides a favourable ecosystem that supports plant growth and regulates soil quality.

We need to work with our soil, not against it, to improve its resilience. A region's sustainable development requires not only the reclamation and conservation of environmental assets, particularly soil, but also a scientific foundation for environmentally conscious management. An integrated approach needs to be followed to ensure sustainability. Soil health can be improved by adopting the following practices:

Sufficient manure application: The application of organic manure is recommended either after the harvest or before sowing to replenish the organic matter of the soil.

Integrated nutrient management: An approach that recommends using organic manures along with synthetic fertilizers to increase productivity while conserving the soil for future use. This system of nutrient management helps in preventing soil deterioration and promotes carbon sequestration.

Application of soil amendments: Any organic or inorganic material added to soil to improve its properties is known as a soil amendment. This practice helps to provide a better soil environment for plant and microbial growth. Some commonly used amendments are compost, sawdust, lime, etc.

Inoculating soils with effective microorganisms: Various formulations of microbes are available that help in increasing the availability of nutrients to the plants. Soil microbial populations significantly affect soil and crop health. The microbes act on the organic matter and release nutrients into the soil which can then be taken by the plants for various metabolic activities.

Crop rotation and cover cropping:

Sequentially planting different crops on the same field helps improve soil conditions, increases biodiversity, has a positive effect on soil microbes and helps combat various pests and disease cycles.

Regular soil testing: The soil should be tested regularly to formulate proper nutrient management strategies. It aids in confirming any deficiency or toxicity-related disorders. It helps us to understand the soil better and restore its health.

Working in the farming sector for quite some time now, I have realized that there is a huge gap that needs to be filled. Our farming community needs to be made aware of the effects of both over and under-use of agrochemicals. If we take nutrient management in a traditional apple orchard, for instance, it is recommended that the fertilizers should be given in split doses, but what happens in the field is that the entire recommended quantity and even more than that is applied at the start of the season. A larger portion of this applied fertilizer is lost in the soil and negatively impacts the uptake of other nutrients present in it. The orchardists then complain of the fruit not being of good quality and various other physiological disorders.

In Kashmir application of cow dung to the soil is a common practice. Well-decomposed cow dung is organic manure that helps in improving soil qualities. This cow dung, when applied in raw, not fully decomposed form, has a negative effect on soil. It affects nutrient availability, mostly nitrogen, and also acts as a carrier for various pests. Hence it should be ensured that well-decomposed organic manures are added to our soils at the start of the growing season to ensure that our soil contains enough organic matter for the proliferation of helpful soil microbes.

Fertilizer application should be in line with the crop requirements as well as the current soil health status. The soils should be tested before the fertilizer application so that any nutrient deficiencies or toxicities are confirmed and a fertilizer schedule is formulated accordingly. This will help us to target deficiencies and toxicities and take remedial measures accordingly. The efficiency of agrochemicals can be increased by applying them at the right time, in right quantities and by employing right methods.

Sustainability is the only way forward. Campaigns for soil conservation have been very impactful in bringing attention to soil health. It is imperative to educate farmers and other stakeholders on the importance of soil health so that they can achieve better quality yield without deteriorating the soil. We need to have a proper understanding of the land limits. It only takes a minute and if you dig a little, you'll learn a lot about the health and activity of your soil. Integrated management plans need to be introduced to ensure sustainable farming for improved soil health. Regular testing would help us in understanding what's going on inside our soil and how it responds to different fertilizers and crops. This Soil Day, let's just look into our soils.

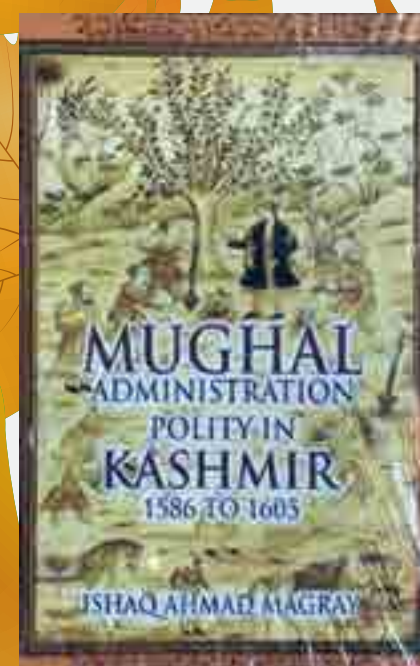
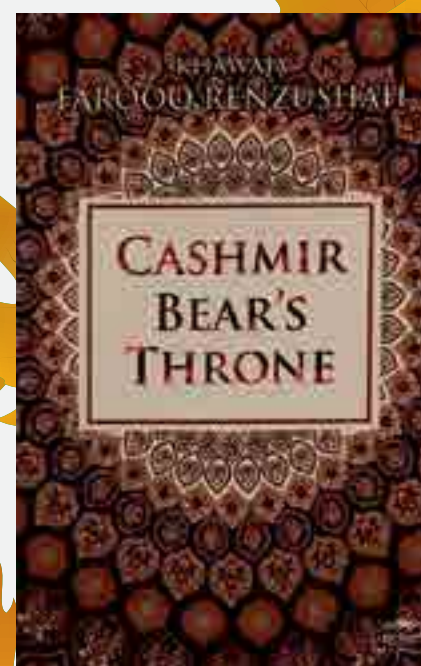
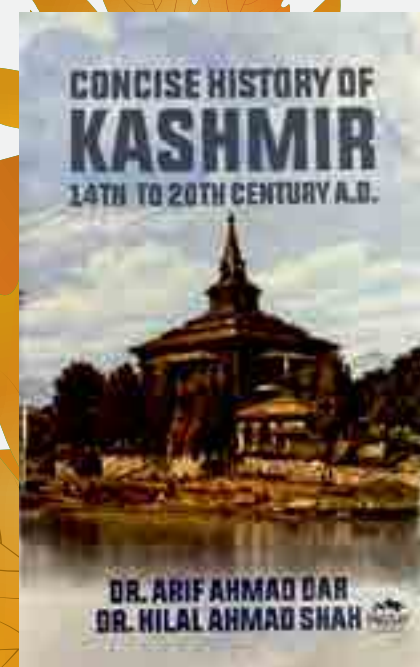
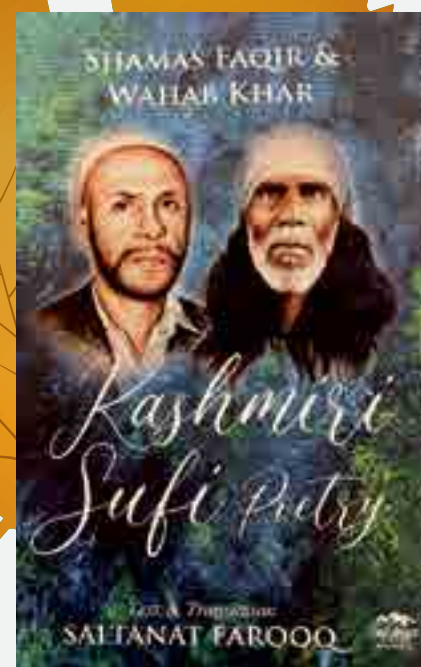
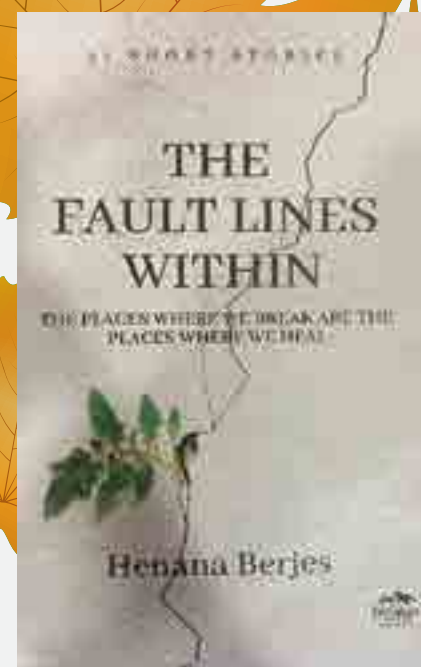
Mariya Dar has a master's in soil sciences.

Soil is Where Life Begins

It wouldn't be wrong for us to say that life cannot exist without soil. Soil, despite being an important resource, is highly neglected and underrated. The productivity of agricultural soils has been declining globally in recent years.

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Ye Na Thi Hamari Qismat

Review of Lily Swarn Saba's collection of ghazals.



PROF. ZAMAN AZURDA

Recently, I happened to read and listen to some poems and *ghazals* of Lily Swarn Saba. Blessed be the circumstances which bring us the joy of the words and poetry of people living far away while sitting at home.

Once upon a time there was a ritual called *arsi mushaf* at Muslim weddings.

The *arsi mushaf* is the occasion when the groom first sees the face of the bride in a mirror held between them. Now television, different websites and various channels have put a mirror in front of everything. WhatsApp, Instagram and email have provided such facilities that you can meet anyone across mountains and oceans at the drop of a hat or chat online and God alone knows what else! I had written long ago in one of my essays that a time will come when elders will tell their grandchildren that in our era there used to be schools, post offices, libraries and markets. My friends scoffed at me and, today, while sitting at home, they shop, sell their goods, study and teach.

It is through this miracle of science that I got the opportunity of listening to and reading Saba's *ghazals*. In any case, Punjabi countenances are very transparent, attractive and pleasing. If, along with this, a couplet also comes onto the lips, then it seems as if sweetness and sugar candy have come together with the perfect meeting of the lips. Punjabi is, anyway, a very sweet language despite some allegations. But it depends on the person who speaks it as to how they balance the harshness and sweetness of the words. As Ghalib said:

*kitne shireen hain tere lab ke raqeeb
galiyan kha kha bemaza na hua*

Thank God that every gesture of Saba is charming and every glance alluring. Her manner of speaking is so sweet that howsoever surly or ill-tempered the person listening to her may be, in just a moment, he melts and turns into honey.

Sometimes, one has to believe how much words can affect the mood of a person. There is a Chinese story that a philosopher heard from someone that a practitioner prescribed some words to the sick as a cure. The philosopher got angry how words could cure a disease. This man must be a fraudster who traps people in his net, he thought. One day, the philosopher reached out to the man. As soon as he saw him, he angrily told him what he felt about him. The physician asked him to sit down and, after a while, he started abusing the philosopher who obviously got angry. His face turned red, his heart beat got faster, pulse rate increased, blood pressure increased and his mood kept swinging. He pounced on the healer in ire.



Soon, the therapist changed his tone, apologized and said: 'Two or three times a year, I lose my head and get such an attack that I start talking hysterically. Even today, the same thing happened, I feel extremely ashamed'.

While he was speaking softly, the condition of the philosopher started improving. His face gradually got back its color, the speed of the heart beat was back to normal, the pulse got normal as well.

"Now, have you realized the power of words or not?" the curer asked. The philosopher nodded in wonderment.

The manner in which words are spoken and who utters them matters. When these words come in the form of *ghazals*, they create changes in their inferences and conjectures. When the speaker's disposition is Punjabi, which has artlessness, unaffectedness, spontaneity and the speech is guileless and straightforward, then a *ghazal* written in Urdu is not just a *ghazal*, but it is suffused with such a substance within itself that bursts out all kinds of glistening lights and makes everything shimmer and melt.

If you want to see all this at one place and be happy with them, then keep looking at Saba with your eyes,

Thank God that every gesture of Saba is charming and every glance alluring. Her manner of speaking is so sweet that howsoever surly or ill-tempered the person listening to her may be, in just a moment, he melts and turns into honey.

keep listening to her with your ears and keep soaking her *ghazals* not only into your mind and heart but also into your soul. As a sample, I present a few couplets for you:

*tujhko aane mein dair lagti hai
phir manane mein dair lagti hai*

*surkh jode mein thak gayi hai dulhan
sharm jaane mein dair lagti hai*

Or these couplets:
*roze-e-mahshar badi nadamat se
muaaf karwayenge karam apne*

*sara aalam yeh ghair jaisa hai
aap hain bas Khuda qasam apne*

These couplets show a quiet confidence. How fascinating is this poetry! It is as if whispers and sweet nothings are being heard by the reader or the listener. The intriguing part is that when a man closes his eyes after listening to these couplets, he searches for those fluttering, dancing images which play hide and seek in his mind's eye. The wonder of Saba is that she creates immense wealth in few words. Here, the words and their meaning blend with each other like air and fragrance. The sweetness of Punjab in Saba's *ghazals*, the comfort and relief of the breeze coming from Himachal and the fusion with the Urdu world present such a likeness of a Turkish miniature painting which looks like a Jewel and gem-studded Arabic script even without any brush and color, which is apparently simple but many types of hues and colors fall flat in front of it. Believe me, this is the magic of Urdu language, which can hypnotise a reader or listener.

Prof. Zaman Azurda is an author, researcher, translator and a film writer.

Thank God that every gesture of Saba is charming and every glance alluring. Her manner of speaking is so sweet that howsoever surly or ill-tempered the person listening to her may be, in just a moment, he melts and turns into honey.

A Diehard Fan's Lifetime Regret

How a Dilip Kumar fan almost met his icon and yet ended up not getting to meet him ever.

LALIT MAGAZINE

“Hello, *sahab hain kya?*” I asked, holding on to the telephone receiver as if my very life depended on the answer from the other end.

“Aap kaun bol rahen hain, sir?” The voice on the other end was that of an employee of Dilip Kumar and he wouldn't hand over the phone to the great man himself unless he knew who I was.

This was June 1987. I had taken up a job in Mumbai just a few days back. When I landed in Mumbai, the only thing on my mind was that I had to meet and speak to Dilip Kumar. Come what may! I had been a huge fan of his since my school days and had always wished to see him in flesh and blood.

My work had brought me to the film capital of India many a time in the past, but on those occasions, it was all work and no play. This was the first time that I was actually staying in the city, had a lot of time to myself and was also alone as my wife had not joined me yet. Not that she would have stopped me from meeting the *sahab*, being herself a great fan of his, but she would certainly have made fun of my juvenile attempts to get in touch with my hero. And as an aside, let me confess, juvenile they certainly were.

The company I was working for had allotted me a flat right above the office and the office doors were open to me 24x7. From day one, I had started thinking of ways I could contact Dilip Kumar and the first thought that came to my mind was to ring him up. But I did not have his number so how would I be able to call him? Those days, we used to have a telephone directory that listed all the numbers of people who had phones. It was the era of the landline, cell phones had not even been thought of yet.

So one evening, my head churning with weird opening gambits, I came down to my office and opened the pages of the directory. Soon, I was searching for the name Yusuf Khan, but there was no number listed under that name. Now, I tried Saira Bano's number but, again, found nothing.

A quitter that I never was, I recalled having heard that at times he would put up at his mother-in-law Naseem Bano's place. I quickly looked for a number listed under that name and found the eureka moment grinning right at me. I immediately dialed the number and here I was, asking for *sahab*, as everybody in

the industry addressed him.

“Main Yash Chopra Sahib ke yahan se bol raha hoon, wo baat kareng,” I blurted out, lying without blinking an eyelid. Mendacity and glib lying have never been my forte, but my love for the *sahab* had turned me into a poker-faced liar. Whenever I recall my brazen audacity on that day, I feel embarrassed.

“Theek hai, Sir, abhi bulata hoon *sahab ko.*” Those words made my heartbeat go berserk. I was about to talk directly with my hero, the man I worshipped. At the same time, I was also nervous about how I would explain the blatant lie. I didn't have to wait long before I got to hear the all too familiar voice.

“Ji, farmayiye, Yash bol rahe ho *kya?*” I was dumbstruck but somehow managed to find my voice.

“Very, very sorry, sir, I had to lie to you. I am a great fan of yours, I wanted to desperately talk to you and this was the only way to get you to the phone,” I sheepishly explained, waiting for an angry retort. Instead, I heard a hearty laugh.

“Kamaal kar diya aap ne *sahab*, fans to bahut hain magar mujse baat karne ka yeh tareeka pehle kisi ne nahi apnaya. Maan gaye aapko.”

I was not surprised that he addressed me as *sahab*. I already knew that was his way of addressing others, similar to how everyone addressed him. Thrilled beyond imagination, I heaved a sigh of relief and awe.

“Kaise hain aap, *sahab?* Main aapse milne ke liye Kashmir se aaya hoon, bachpan se aapka fan hoon aur aapki har film dekhi hai,” I said as his approach had already made me comfortable.

“Meri khushkismati hai ki aap itni door se se aayen hain aur mujse baat karne ke liye itne khel khelne pade aapko,” I could detect a hint of fun in his voice.

“Khair, *kya kar sakta hoon aapke liye?*” the great man asked. His politeness and humility floored me. I became an even bigger fan, if that was possible given how immeasurably big a fan I already was.

“Sahab, *bahut samay se aapko dekha nahi, koi film nahi aayi aapki?* Why do you make your fans wait so long?” I asked.

“Ab bahut ho gaya, *sahib!* Bahut kaam kar liya, ab aaram karne ke din hain,” he replied with total calmness and in a style that we see in his movies.

“Sir, *vo film aapki, Aag Ka Dariya, abhi tak complete nahi hui.* Won't we be able to see it?” Aag Ka Dariya was his

first film opposite Rekha and we had been waiting for its release for a long time.

“Woh to mukamal ho gayi, jaldi release hogi,” he said.

“Great news, sir! Looking forward to seeing that,” I said gleefully.

We talked for a couple of minutes more. He invited me to meet him but said that I should call him first. He said I should give my name to his secretary and next time when I called, I would not have to resort to lies.

That whole night I could not sleep. My dream had come true. I had spoken to the god of acting - my all-time favourite actor.

My mind went back to my school days when I first recognized his acting prowess, when my younger brother, took me along with him to see *Gunga Jamuna*. And that was that! Once I came out of the cinema hall, I could think of nothing else but the master's performance. The dialogues kept ringing in my ears. From that day onwards, Dilip Kumar became a stowaway in my psyche, always lurking in some corner. The release of his movie became an event in my life. It was always the first day, the first show for all his movies.

Ram Aur Shyam was my next movie and I was blown away by another great performance. Then began the journey to discover Dilip Kumar. I started watching all his old movies and I doubt I have missed any of them, except, *Jwar Bhata*, his debut film. That too because the producers had lost the print

December 5, 2022 is his first birthday after his death and his memories come flooding back. He redefined the meaning of acting. If *Gunga Jamuna* was a superlative performance, *Sagina* was not far behind. I wonder why some critics don't rate *Sagina* as one of his best, but I certainly do. Anyway, I was his fan, am his fan, and will always remain one. I still watch his movies again and again and, each time, I find something new, some aspect to gush over, some point to discuss. One of the scenes from *Sagina* which I found totally mesmerizing is his swaggering gait and expressions in the song *saala mai to sahib bann gaya*. I have watched that scene countless times, much to the chagrin of family members.

Back to my conversation with the *sahab* when he said that I could have a meeting with him. I was as thrilled and excited as a teenager going on the first date.

It was impossible for me to wait for long but my job kept me busy. One day, I decided to make that important call. The same man answered the phone. I gave him my name and he immediately

asked: “I know. *Sahab* told me you would call. When can you come?”

I can come tomorrow, I replied instantly.

“Well, he is not in Mumbai; he will be back on the 25th. Will it be possible for you to come on the 26th at 5 in the evening?” he enquired.

“Of course!” I said with cheerful readiness.

I had no idea that destiny had made up its mind that my meeting with my idol would never take place. On the 20th, I received a call from the head office asking me to take over the Pune office immediately. And that was the end of my glorious dream. I left for Pune, was refused a leave of any kind.

Not meeting my *sahab* – our *sahab* – remains the greatest regret of my life - a regret that I'd take to my grave.

Lalit Magazine is a cricket and theatre enthusiast. His theatre group Navankur has staged several plays. He loves music and is in the middle of writing two English novels.



Dilip Kumar An Actor's Actor

A tribute to the thespian on his birth centenary.

SHABIR HUSSAIN

In 1934, Indian cinema's first diva, Devika Rani, and her husband, Himanshu Rai, set up Bombay Talkies, which produced several hit movies with Ashok Kumar and her in the lead in most of them.

Brought up and educated in England, Rani, along with Rai, had studied filmmaking in Germany.

While she contributed immensely to the development of the early cinema when the talkies had just begun, Rani's single most important contribution to the Indian film industry would come a decade later when she introduced Yusuf Khan aka Dilip Kumar, who was to write Indian cinema's grammar book on acting through myriad performances in the years to follow.

Kumar, though, wasn't sure if this was the track he was supposed to choose, knowing that his father was strictly against watching movies, let

alone acting in them.

Lala Ghulam Sarwar Khan would often snub his close friend Bhasheshwarnath Kapoor on why he had allowed his handsome, strapping son Prithviraj to work in films. Less than a couple of decades later, Khan's son and Prithviraj were to work together in the epic *Mughal-e-Azam* under the maverick genius K. Asif's baton.

When Kumar finally made up his mind to join Bombay Talkies as an actor, thanks largely to a princely salary of Rs1,250 per month, he asked Devika Rani that he would work under a *nom de guerre* to keep it from his family, especially his father. He was given three choices: Jahangir, Vasudev and Dilip Kumar. Anything but Yusuf Khan, he said.

His excellent command on Urdu kept Kumar in good stead as he would assist the Bombay Talkies script writers, most of whom were Bengalis and not much at ease with the language.

His boss made sure he was present at all the shootings and other proceedings before his shaky debut in *Jwar Bhata* (1944), directed by Amiya Chakravarty.

Dilip Kumar didn't have an ideal start to his film career with a disastrous debut and a couple of subsequent flops. But once he found his idiom, there was no looking back.

Jwar Bhata was a disaster at the box office and Kumar gave every impression that he didn't belong there. The unforgiving film critic and editor of now defunct Filmindia, Babu Rao Patel, wrote in his typically trenchant critique that it was an amateurish production. He was particularly dismissive of the debutant, describing him as “new anemic hero.”

Patel went on to say: “He looks gaunt and famished and strikes one as a long ill-treated convict who has escaped from a jail. His appearance on the screen creates both laughter and disappointment. His acting effort in this picture amounts to nil.”

A couple of years later, the same Patel had to write a telling compliment in his biting style: “What did Kamini Kaushal find when Dev Anand embraced her in *Ziddi* [1948]? She discovered that Dilip Kumar embraced her better in *Shaheed* [1947].”

But to get there, Kumar had to put in a lot of effort. He worked and re-worked on his voice and expressions. To get a sense and feel of the craft and its nuances, he started binge-watching Hollywood movies. He was hugely inspired by James Stewart and Ingrid Bergman whose movies he would watch over and over again. Until then, he had watched just one or two movies.

After *Jwar Bhata*, Kumar worked again with Amiya Chakravarty in *Daag* (1952) - written by Progressive Urdu writer Rajinder Singh Bedi - and won the Filmfare award for Best Actor. The award was established the same year. Kumar went on to bag it seven more times.

Like *Jwar Bhata*, Kumar's second film *Pratima* too tanked at the box office and his acting wasn't notable either. It was in his third movie *Milan* (1946) – not a runaway success though - that Dilip Kumar found his feet. Thanks to director Nitin Bose who groomed him meticulously. Bose helped him understand how to study the script and interpret roles.

Bose was to again direct him in the profound love tragedy *Deedar* (1951), which won him the sobriquet Tragedy King. It was also the first major attempt, and an extremely successful one, at method acting by the thespian. He spent a lot of time with a blind fakir on the roads of Mumbai (then Bombay) to immerse himself in the character.

It was for the first time that a blind man was played by an Indian actor with open eyes on the screen. Earlier actors would keep their eyes closed while playing such characters. Kumar's performance and Naushad's music set to moving lyrics by Shakeel Badayuni turned the movie into a rage. *Deedar* also established Mohammad Rafi as the thespian's playback voice.

Between *Milan* and *Deedar*, Kumar did exactly a dozen movies that established him as a superstar, none as distinct as *Andaz* (1949).

Andaz, a bold theme for its time, started a productive association between him and director Mehboob Khan. After the movie was released Kumar walked away with all the acclaim. This is the only film that features Kumar and Raj Kapoor together.

With Khan, Kumar went on to make two more movies, *Aan* (1951) and *Amar* (1954) – both terrific movies riding on Kumar's spectacular performances and Naushad's brilliant music.

Other than Mehboob and Bose, there was another director who had an even greater influence over Dilip Kumar: Bimal Roy. Kumar did three movies with Roy – *Yahudi*, *Madhumati* and *Devdas* – all critically acclaimed.

Kumar's stellar performance in *Devdas* moved one and all, including the then prime minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was swept off his feet by the melancholic portrayal of a doomed lover trying to drown his sorrow in alcohol. It was performances like these that prompted V Shantaram to exclaim: “Had Shakespeare met Dilip Kumar, he would have added one more character to the already well-defined ones he had created.”

So deep under the skin of his tragic characters – especially *Devdas* – did Kumar go that he had to consult a psychologist in London who advised him to take a break from such intense roles and choose some light, leisurely ones. And that's how *Kohinoor* and *Leader* happened. Again, Kumar enthralled the cinegoers with his comic timing and showed that he was at equal ease with comedy as well.

So committed was Kumar to his characters that he came under the tutelage of sitar maestro Ustad Halim Jaffar Khan for six months to give a realistic feel in the couple of Naushad-composed songs in *Kohinoor* in which he plays the sitar with a svelte Kumkum dancing to the classical tunes. It was not for nothing that Satyajit Ray called him the ultimate method actor.

A polyglot extraordinaire, Kumar performed in Bengali film *Sagina Mahato* (1970) leaving the Bengali viewers and critics in awe of his impeccable diction and acting. Earlier, the thespian had stamped his authority on Awadhi dialect in the home production *Gunga Jumna* (1961), a block buster directed by Nitin Bose. Noted actor Utpal Dutt wrote in his *Sagina Mahato* review: “Perhaps Dilip Kumar had come to Bengal thinking that he would give us Bengalis a lesson in the art of acting. I must admit that he did exactly that.”

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Satyajit Ray's Ultimate Method Actor



Earning the sobriquet Tragedy King, Dilip Kumar was at equal ease with comedy and leisurely roles.

SHABIR HUSSAIN

Dilip Kumar's entry into the world of cinema was as phantasmagorical as his rise to superstardom after some initial hiccups. When the glamorous actor-producer Devika Rani offered him a job in her production house as an actor, he was reluctant but agreed only after Rani quoted a monthly salary of Rs1250, which was a fortune back in the day.

He had inhibitions also because his strict father was dismissive of cinema and would never have wanted him to become an actor. It's because of this reason that Rani had to rechristen him as Dilip Kumar from his original name Yusuf Khan.

After a couple of shaky initial performances including the disastrous 1944 debut movie *Jwar Bhata*, Kumar found his histrionic idiom and never looked back, scripting one iconic performance after another.

He rounded off the formative forties with a power-packed performance in Mehboob Khan's *Andaz* (1949) that also featured his childhood friend Raj Kapoor and the leading lady of the day, Nargis.

With Dev Anand, Kapoor and Kumar formed the formidable trinity on

which the Indian cinema rested through the fifties and the sixties. While Kapoor and Anand reigned equally supreme at the box office giving flurry of hits, Kumar stood out for the depth of his craft and the selection of films.

Come 1950 and Kumar, still in his twenties, had seasoned into a mature performer adored by masses and classes alike. But his best was yet to come. Fifties was the decade that would register him as a colossus towering over his contemporaries and those who came before and after him.

1950 was also a landmark in the world of cinema as it saw the introduction of Marlon Brando with the release of *The Men*, a film that failed commercially but earned praise from the critics. It also won Brando much acclaim. While Kumar was an absolute novice and a reluctant actor when he accepted Rani's offer, Brando was an actor by choice and had learnt the ropes at Broadway theatre before venturing into Hollywood.

He had done plays and had also appeared in the 1949 TV series *Actors Studio*. Kumar had no such privilege before embarking on his screen journey. But he more than made up for it through sheer handwork, observation, application and brilliance of mind. Kumar gorged himself on Hollywood movies. James Stewart and Ingrid Bergman inspired him profoundly.

Both the thespians epitomised the

Dilip Kumar embodied the zeitgeist of an era gone by and they don't make them like that anymore.

art of method acting. While Dilip Kumar earned 'the ultimate method actor' epithet from the globally acclaimed director Satyajit Ray, Brando was billed as Hollywood's poster boy of method acting, a tag he wasn't too fond of, though.

Kumar's versatility prompted filmmaker V Shantaram to pronounce: "Had Shakespeare met Dilip Kumar, he would have added one more character to the already well-defined ones he had created."

It isn't just his understated body language and the depth in his eyes, but also his impactful and impeccably measured dialogue delivery that mesmerised the audience and continues to do so to this day. When he is playing a withdrawn character, he lets his eyes and pauses between words and sentences speak and when the character demands passion and aggression, his vocals can explode.

Two contrasting cases in point here can be two spectacular scenes from *Andaz* and *Mashaal* (1984). In the *Andaz* scene, when Nargis introduces him to Raj Kapoor, he hardly says a word but the hate and displeasure of a jealous lover is unmistakably portrayed through his eyes.

In the *Mashaal* scene, he brings alive the helplessness and pain through his power-packed voice as he watches his wife die before his eyes. Very few actors could bring to the fore the intensity that the scene demands.

So involved was he in his pathos-ridden characters that earned him the sobriquet of 'tragedy king' that, on the advice of a psychologist, he had to periodically switch over to light comic roles that he rendered with equal ease as is evident in movies like *Azad*, *Kohinoor* and *Leader*.

It took him six months to train as a sitarist just to give a few perfect shots in *Kohinoor*.

There must have been a very special coordination between his brain and the organs of speech that gave his

dialogues timing and impeccability, leaving the listeners spellbound. That perhaps was also the secret of his polyglottery. Kumar was fluent in Urdu, English, Hindi, Pashto, Hindko, Punjabi, Bengali and Marathi.

Kumar's relish for languages and literature enriched his acting enormously.

He could masterfully transcend the barriers of language and dialect. That's why he could comfortably bridge the gap between the chaste Urdu speaking Salim of *Mughal-e-Azam* and the rustic Ganga of *Ganga Jamuna* who communicates in Awadhi dialect. He played *Sagina Mahato* and spoke fluent Bengali that left the Bengalis in awe and admiration of him.

So gifted was he that when you listen to his duet with Lata from *Musafir* (1957), you feel he could easily have made a career as a singer.

No tribute to Dilip Kumar is complete without a word or two on Saira Bano — his better half, his alter ego and his doting wife. Bano, a wonderful actress herself, is a symbol of marital commitment who exemplifies what a life partner should be like.

It was this strong bond between the two that could weather the storm of Kumar's secret marriage that was later terminated and which he refers to as lapse of judgement in his memoir. Kumar was 44 and Bano 22 when the two married in 1966.

An avid philanthropist, Kumar was also a champion of communal harmony. The way he reached out to communities to build bridges after the 93 Mumbai riots is exemplary. Whether he had to go to the suburbs of Mumbai for social service or to London to generate funds for Imran Khan's cancer hospital, he was always ready to serve.

So charismatic and influential was he that when at the time of Kargil War in 1999, situation between India and Pakistan was tense, Prime Minister Vajpayee called Kumar over to Delhi and had him speak to Nawaz Sharif to ease the tension.

Kumar embodied the zeitgeist of an era gone by and they don't make them like that anymore.

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Hail Ben Stokes and Co.

The heist that England pulled off at Rawalpindi after a bold declaration is one of a kind and will be talked about for a long time to come.

NEWSLINE STAFFER

To the puritans of the game, Test cricket is the real deal. Every now and then, in the middle of the T20 razmataaz that has overshadowed the longest format, we get to see a thrilling duel that reinforces our belief in Test cricket.

On December 5 at Rawalpindi, England sealed a Test match that looked all set for a draw after the first two innings.

From the very first day of the test, England walked out with a lethal intent that has come to be known as Bazball after England coach Brendon McCullum who is fondly known as Baz. The Bazball is his brand of cricket - the dashing, forceful display of batting that he exhibited throughout his career across formats.

It didn't come as a surprise when McCullum put Australian bowlers to sword scoring the fastest 54-ball Test hundred, making his swansong unforgettable. That is the intent and attitude that he has infused in this English side.

Before the start of the series, the England coach made his intent very clear saying the side would continue with the mantra of attacking cricket.

"We'll be pushing for results. If we get outplayed, that is okay," McCullum pronounced. With an enterprising Ben Stokes leading an aggressive, immensely talented side, McCullum wasn't off the mark.

Even before the start of the series, Stokes had won hearts after he proclaimed that he would donate his entire match fee of the series to the flood relief cause in Pakistan. And, as if that wasn't enough, his bold declaration on Day 4 won him more hearts.

Winning the toss, England elected to bat on a placid batting track but when Crawley and Duckett walked out to open the innings, they made it abundantly clear in the very first hour of the play that England were intent upon forcing a result on a dead track that looked like a bowlers' graveyard. So brutal was the opening onslaught that was taken forward by the English middle-order that it was hard to believe that we were watching Test cricket and not a T20 burst. But all the while, the spectators were treated to pure cricketing shots. England plundered a mammoth 506 runs on Day 1 with four batsmen - Crawley, Duckett, Pope and Brooks - blasting hundreds. Both the number of runs on the first day of the Test and four batsmen scoring a hundred is the new record. This even while the Stumps were called fifteen overs short of the



An aggressive approach and an intent to win has improved England's Test fortunes under coach McCullum and captain Ben Stokes.

From the very first day of the test, England walked out with a lethal intent that has come to be known as Bazball after England coach Brendon McCullum who is fondly known as Baz. The Bazball is his brand of cricket - the dashing, forceful display of batting that he exhibited throughout his career across formats.

scheduled close of play due to poor light. We might have been treated to more fireworks for another hour or so if the light had permitted the play.

In response, Pakistani openers exercised great caution while also playing their strokes. The opening stand of 225 runs meant Pakistan were capable enough to effect a draw. Openers Abdullah Shafique and Imam-ul-Haque scored typically sedate Test hundreds which was followed by another hundred by Skipper Babar Azam, Pakistan getting all out for 579 on Day 4. The Test looked every bit a draw.

But England captain Ben Stokes, and of course others around him as well, had different plans.

In the second innings, England exhibited more aggression and posted 264/7 in less than 36 overs and, surprisingly, declared the innings, setting Pakistan an achievable target of 343. It was a bold declaration, given the placid nature of the wicket and a formidable Pakistani batting lineup that had proved itself in the first innings in the face of a massive England total.

Led by the old wily fox James

Anderson and the inexperienced Ollie Robinson, who took four wickets apiece, England managed to get Pakistan out for 268 runs registering a well-deserved 74-run win.

The timing of England's declaration that could have backfired is what infused a lease of life in a dead Test and created a result. Decisions like these and the intent with which England batted is what Test cricket needs.

In the final moments of the match when England were a whisker away from a glorious win, the field placing - all the fielders encircling the batsman - underscored what Test cricket is all about. The moment was reminiscent of the days of yore when filed placements such as these were witnessed more often. England pulled off a heist that it duly deserved after the brand of cricket it displayed. As accolades keep pouring in, this win by England and the way they forced a result will be talked about for a long time to come. On any given day, a Rawalpindi thriller is always welcome rather than a drab Test borne of defensive tactics and a lack of intent. Give it up for Ben Stokes and Co.

ISIS Presence in Afghanistan is a Threat to All

The recent attack on the Pakistani embassy in Kabul should be a concern for all the stakeholders.



SHOME BASU

Terrorist attacks on diplomats is not new in Kabul or elsewhere in Afghanistan. Indian, Russian, American and Pakistani diplomats have always been the prime target. Also, the diplomats from NATO allies aren't safe but not in as bad a position as these four countries.

In a recent attack, Pakistan's *chargé d'affaires*, Obaid Nizamani, escaped a bid on his life at the Embassy complex in the highly secured Green Zone of Kabul city. His bodyguard was injured in the attack. The assailants managed to flee. Later Taliban said it caught one of the terrorists.

Such attacks on the embassies are nothing new to Kabul but the continuation of such violence poses a larger threat to the regional piece.

Let's get back to some similar attacks that rocked embassies in Kabul over the last couple of decades or so.

It was a July morning and temperature was soaring in Kabul. The 8 am light was scorching white. Watermelon sellers hawking and streets filled with traffic and smoke from mud-ovens baking breads was thickening the atmosphere. The traffic was busy, mostly with old Toyota cars honking and screaming at each other.

A worn-out Toyota Camry blew off at the gates of the Indian embassy with a huge bang that could be heard miles away. The blast killed 58 and injured over 150 people. The Toyota was driven by a 22-year-old suicide bombert. Just two cars ahead of him, entering the embassy was India's Defence Attache, Brig. Ravi Dutt Mehta. He was among the first to die in the suicide attack.

Apart from Hindi and English, Brig. Mehta could converse in Pashto, Mandarin and Tibetan. Earlier posted in Kashmir as the head of Military Intelligence, he was an obvious target for the Taliban's Haqqani network.

At the gate, two ITBP sentries succumbed while inside the embassy building, a 44-year-old IFS officer looking after the press, V Venkateshwara Rao, hit the ceiling so hard that he died instantly. The attack shook the diplomatic corps in Kabul.

A year before the Kabul attack, another attack at the Indian consulate in Jalalabad killed an ITBP jawan at the gate. 2009 saw another attack at the In-



IS-K's Khorasan Chapter claimed the responsibility for the attack on Pakistan embassy that was carried out on December 2.

dian embassy in a similar trail of events when a *fidayi* triggered a bomb killing himself and seventeen others and injuring many more. A car laden with explosives came close to the first security cordon and the suicide bomber Khalid detonated himself.

In another attack in 2016, heavily armed men attacked the thinly staffed Indian consulate in Mazar Sharif in Northern Afghanistan. Heavy exchange of fire took place between the Indian security posted under ITBP and the Taliban. Ata Noor, an Afghan warlord turned politician, himself used the RPG to defend the Indian consulate. Somehow, the attack was foiled without any major loss.

In 2017, in the city of Jalalabad bordering Pakistan's Khyber region, a Pakistani diplomat was gunned down. Nayyar Iqbal, a visa officer with the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad, was buying grocery from a city store when two men on a motorbike came and fired at him using AK-47.

Pakistan accused Amrulla Saleh of orchestrating the attack in connivance

with R&AW.

Since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban on 15th of August 2021, the world has been pointing fingers at ISI and Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) for all the alleged help they provided to install Taliban. Images of the then ISI director Lt Gen Faiz Hamid and Ambassador Mansoor Ahmad Khan interacting with the Taliban leadership went viral. India had to evacuate with the help of IAF.

Taliban regaining power was a turning point for India as New Delhi was close to the Ghani government while Taliban saw India working against it. The Taliban holding RPG, M16s and Kalashnikovs made India feel a bit nervous, all for the previous attacks on the diplomatic staff. Although much later India sent a technical team by consulting with the Taliban's foreign ministry to take care of the embassy that was left vacant by Ambassador Rudendra Tandon and his staff in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover. A team of ITBP is also there to protect the embassy in Kabul's elite Green Zone.

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After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, India has actively been engaging with the mul-lah regime and has even reopened the embassy in Kabul that has resumed all the operations there, except for visa services that threatens to become a major sore point between New Delhi and Kabul. India is also reportedly planning to restart all the major infrastructure development projects there even as China continues with its mega projects.

Obaid Nizamani took over early this November from Mansoor Khan who was also the Deputy High-commissioner of Pakistan to New Delhi in his previous assignments. Nizamani was new in the city although he was looking after the South Asia from MOFA. The attack on Nizamani, claimed by the ISIS-K, comes at a time when Herat Security Dialogue took place in Dushanbe and NRF leader Ahmad Masood and former NDS chief Rahamatulla Nabil and Pakistani PFM leader Mohsin Dawar were present there.

ISIS-K would, by all means, want to eliminate the important assets of Taliban and, obviously, Pakistan remains to be on top of the list.

This September in Kabul, two Russian diplomatic staffers were killed in a blast claimed by the ISIS. Just a month before this bombing, Russia's FSB had arrested an ISIS plotter in Moscow who was said to be plotting attacks against India.

The penetration of ISIS into Islamic and non-Islamic countries is becoming more dangerous than ever. If the SAARC countries along with other regional groups frame a strategy and get together to take on the larger enemy, it would be a much better idea than having regional splits and fighting among themselves.

Shome Basu is a New Delhi-based senior journalist.

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