

Letter To Dilip Kumar

12 Zeck Ct.
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New York - 10901
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Dear Yusuf Sahib,

It is very difficult for me to tell you why I am writing to you. Let me tell you this way: if most of your life you have wanted to do something, because your heart wanted it, then looking for rationales for that is a foolish exercise.

I grew up in Srinagar, Kashmir during the middle of the last century. In those days a growing young adult had only a few things to satisfy his burning desire to identify with something meaningful and intense. Radio delivered music and movies were two of the vehicles for that, besides books and watching stars in the sky. In the realm of the movies I pretty soon found that you were the lord of my emotions, the crystallizer of my ideals.

It has been difficult for me to write this letter for such a long time because writing a fan letter to a celebrity is a very difficult thing for me, because of the embarrassment I would feel to admit my weakness for him. But in the end I thought that I must write the letter as I would unburden myself of a long sustained load and also it might create some unknown benefit to me.

As a teenager, after seeing your movies, I would feel sad for several days, as at the time your movies that I saw were all tragedies. It would become very difficult

for me to come to the real world.

What was in you that mesmerized me? It was the power of your depiction of a sad emotion. You directly hit my heart. I thought your sad persona was an approximate reflection of me. So, the forces of identification were at play between us. And also the inspiration to live that the sadness produced. Though sadness can make you less daunted to face life, but it can enrich it by giving it more meaning and power.

In 1962 I came to U.S. for further studies and have stayed here ever since. This deprived me of seeing many of your movies after Mughal-E-Azam when they were released but some of which I saw later. But I kept on seeing your old tragic - era movies. My father, Zind Lal Kaul, came to know you when in early sixties you visited New York, while he was the Press Attache in the Indian Consulate there. In fact you once came to his apartment in Manhattan. Later, in 1974, we met you at Pahalgam, Kashmir, on the set of your movie Bairaag.

An artist attempts to create the selected products out of reality and his imagination. Both reality and imagination are the products of mind. Though they are different entities but often have, though not always, tangible connections. The role of the actor is to accurately portray the character and the situations described in the script but that is not enough. There are a lot of things not written in the script which are essential in the portrayal of the story, which a director and an actor come up with. In fact these things are often more important than the scripted description of the situation and the character. Obviously, the actor has to have been through the hell of the pain of human life, through the scorching struggle of survival. The greatest school of acting is life itself. It is quite obvious that you have been through those experiences as it shows up in your acting. Over fifty years by your human, realistic, and accurate depiction of roles, you have elevated the art of acting to an extraordinarily high level. For this knowledgeable and sensitive human beings will be ever grateful to you. You are an artist and artists stand at the same high level in the human society as scientists, humanitarian workers, public leaders, and religious leaders do.

I wish I could sit down with you and talk about human life and acting. But I know that the chances of doing that are almost nil, as celebrities like you have to keep a screen between themselves and the low-value intruders. I do not even expect a reply to this letter from you for the same reason. But I will not feel hurt if I do not because I will understand the reason behind it.

Yusuf Sahib if you are in New York area my wife and I would like you to come to our place and have a Kashmiri dinner with us. It would be a splendid experience.

May you live in the halo of the sun of peaceful bliss, may you live on with the high generosity of your heart, may you never lose touch with the human condition.

Affectionately,

Maharaj Kaul

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