

# Amidst gramophone songs and vintage films Lure of the Classic

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THOSE who were still in their teens in the 1950s and then growing up in a hurry into adulthood in Dhaka in the 1960s, will feel nostalgia creeping over their senses at the mention of the haunting melodies played on gramophones, and the names of vintage films of Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Hollywood that were shown in the cinema halls of the city. Those were the two decades when all the best songs and all the best movies of the world were created leaving very little opportunity for the posterity to match them. *Roman Holiday!* *Casablanca*, *Quo Vadis*, *A tale of two cities*, *Bindur Chheley*, *Pasher Bari*, *Harano Sur*, *Shagorika*, *Didar*, *Aan*, *Chori Chori*, *Awara*, *Taxi Driver*, *Bazi!* How can anyone match them, ever! These all time greats coming from three film making stations, Hollywood, Calcutta and Bombay, kept the audience in Dhaka enchanted, rather spellbound, for years together. The young hearts inside countless number of young men in Dhaka throbbed violently every time beautiful Audrey Hepburn came on screen in the film *Roman Holiday*. They joined Gregory Peck, the journalist and Audrey Hepburn, the princess as they went around Rome in a romantic escapade in the film. How can one forget the soul-touching last scene when the love-torn pair part forever! The performance of Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck remains unsurpassed even today.

Then there was *Aan*, a Bombay blockbuster film with Dilip Kumar, Nimmi and Nadira doing the lead roles. Part of the film was shot at Switzerland, and that was the first time that a Bombay film was partly shot at a foreign location. The entire song 'Dilmey Chupakey Peyar Ka Tufan Le Chale, Haam Aaj Apni Moutka Saman Le Chale', was shot at a picturesque location in Switzerland. Then there

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was Dev Anand, heartthrob of countless number of young women in the sub-continent. Remember the scene when he sings the song 'Jaye To Jaiye Khaha'? Was not that simply too good to be true? Of course it was not true and only a cinema but they used to make it seem so real. Then there was Suchitra Sen to walk in the dreams of the young men of the sub-continent. Those young men, in their ripe old age today, still find their minds getting fuzzy hearing the songs Hridoy Amar Sundaro Tobo Pai, Bokuler Moto Jharia Poritey Chai or Ghoom Ghoom Chand Jhiki Miki Tara Ei Madhobi Raat Ashenito Kobhu Aar Jiboney Aamar... sung on screen by Suchitra Sen. Her dreamy eyes with that far-away look and the conspicuous curve of her sensuous lips wreaked havoc in the hearts of the young men.

Dhaka was a city of beautiful songs. One could listen to all the great Bangla and Hindi songs of that time while coursing through the roads and lanes of old Dhaka. In fact, old Dhaka was all of Dhaka in those days. All the roadside restaurants used to have gramophones and they used to play those songs to attract clients. Many people used to have

their fourth cup of tea in those restaurants only to stay back to listen to the beautiful songs. True, those songs used to sound so pleasant to the ears. Not like today, loud and raucous 'music' being played at various shopping malls with impunity. But in the good old days, in the 1950s and 1960s that is, those songs used to sooth the nerves and one felt the urge to stop by and listen to the whole song before hitting the road again.

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