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Respected Sir/ Madam,

Re : The contribution of Mohammad Rafi towards the cause of music and humanity.

The evolution of human beings as a race gave way to the birth of many civilizations, cultures over different time spans. During this gradual process, some of the period cultures of those times like music and dance have been chronicled either by way of written evidences or in the form of folklores and stories, passed on from generation to generation. During these earlier periods science had not developed much to capture these developments in an organized manner. The result is that although we are aware that the contemporary maestros had contributed much to the development of these art forms, evidence in the audio or visual forms is not available to evaluate them. Indeed, that may be the reason why the reverberating echo of Sangeet Samrat Taansen's lilting music appears just as an imaginary delight.

With the advancement of science and thereby technology since the twentieth century, the audio and visual gadgets these days have not only preserved such rare arts but also afforded us the opportunity for critical/ comparative evaluation.

India had always been a generous beneficiary of some of these giants of music. Right from the classical to folk to semi-classical and retro-music, these exponents revelled in putting forth their melodies to receptive classes. But, there was one singular voice which stirred the native emotions ceaselessly-and like never before- to masses. It was cutting across language barriers with plain, understandable and yet soul-searching renderings. That was the voice of the legend Mohammad Rafi – Rafi Saahab for us.

We don't revere Rafi Saahab just because he belted out innumerable background scores in so many languages to melodiously touch the various emotions of our life. But because while doing so, he also instilled in the listener, the humanist aspects of values, patriotism, secularism and tolerance. We must understand that this was a veritable challenge as he was in a pluralistic society which was strewn in unending feuds on caste, religious, social and cultural grounds. Even today the songs that he sang 50-60 years back, give the same message of social equality, brotherhood, religious tolerance, human relationships based on sensitive understanding. These songs will never lose their contemporary status. They are as current today as when he first sang them.

It is not our attempt to belittle the contribution of the previous or future recipients of this coveted recognition. But there is hardly any other more deserving soul who could evoke such

unbridled passion amongst us for national integrity, communal harmony, love, self-respect and a matching sensitivity to every other human being. And in a manner which cuts across caste, creed, languages and the inclusive diversity of India's cultural heritage. We are really unfortunate that not only Rafi Saahab has not been considered for this award but that there has neither been any acknowledgement of his virtuosity nor attempt to take forward his mission to bring people together. No monument, no memorial not even a library or a music college to perpetuate his memory! In fact, it is a travesty of the day that he is being denied peace even in his grave, which might be dug up any day in Mumbai.

A Padmashri is the only State honour that he had received during his lifetime; his role in building up a crescendo of opinion towards a consensual approach, equality in religions or understanding the various sentiments of human character through songs have never been acknowledged, much less regarded; his humility, his simplicity and his concern towards everyone irrespective of caste, creed or religion too has not been recognized. Many of his contemporaries have been bestowed Bharat Ratna or Dada Saahab Phalke Award but not this genial genius. Even one aspect – his mellifluous singing – alone would have been enough for such coveted recognition to him. The fact is that he was much more than a legendary singer. Hindi Film music's golden era evolved around him. This is what pinches his followers.

It is not merely a question of honouring Rafi Saahab with Bharat Ratna or an equivalent but the pent up feelings of crores of his countrymen who feel that even after 30 years of his death, the powers that be have still not evaluated his contribution of keeping the national fabric he so closely knit. The continuous apathy by successive governments evokes melancholic responses. Would we ever be able to repay our indebtedness to that magical voice that instilled the values of goodness into us, exhorted us to be sensitive to different issues and showed us the way to achieve our personal and national goals with one single objective in mind "Sarve Sukhino Bhavantu".

Therefore, in appreciation of his mammoth contribution to music and national integrity, we feel that to honour him with the highest civilian award of the nation would be a befitting, albeit a delayed- acknowledgement of an individual who was humanity personified. Let us do it at the earliest before some neighbouring nation steals a march over us and anoints him with its highest award. In no field we are second to this nation. Let us not yield that initiative to them even on this sensitive issue. Rafi Saahab was, is and will always be India's national treasure.

With these words we approach you in all humility to consider the following as a mark of respect to the departed legend:

- 1) To honour him with Bharat Ratna;
- 2) To commemorate his memory at least one National Institution of highest standards be set-up as a memorial to him which will be a music library and a University dedicated to music only;

3) To institute a National Award in his name given annually to deserving performers.

We are confident that our appeal for conferment of the Bharat Ratna award to Rafi Saahab will find favour with you.

Name

Voter ID no.-

Address

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