

ADIEU ANNAVARE...

Rajkumar, 78, died on Wednesday afternoon following a cardiac arrest

BANGALORE, April 12. Kannada thespian Rajkumar is dead, according to his personal physician Dr Ramana Rao.

The septuagenarian actor died following a cardiac arrest on Wednesday afternoon, Rao told PTI. Rajkumar was shifted to the M S Ramaiah hospital in Bangalore where he breathed his last with his family members by his side, he said.

"We tried to revive him but could not succeed. We did everything," Rao said. The 78-year-old actor, who made his debut in the film world nearly five decades ago, is a revered figure in the state of Karnataka.

He was admitted to the Wockhardt Hospital and Heart Institute one-and-a-half-months ago after he complained of chest pain, bronchial allergy and lung infection. He was discharged within days after he fully recovered.

His story...

Revered as a demi-god by millions of his fans, Rajkumar has never run short of either love, fame, adulation or media space in his five-decade long career, traversing different genres of films right from mythological, historical to an indigenous version of a James Bond flick. Despite his advancing years, Rajkumar's appearance on the marquee was always heralded by wolf whistles, uninhibited hero worship and mass hysteria, even for films that have hit the screen after a long hiatus.

For this Padma Bhushan and Dadasaheb Phalke award winner and the recipient of nearly nine state awards (for best actor), 10 filmfare awards and even a national award in the best singer category, the title of 'Nata Saarbhowma' (the emperor of acting) conferred by his fans, speaks volumes of the man, considered an undisputed cult figure in Karnataka.

The legend, Mutturaju Singanalluru Puttaswamy, was born on April 24, 1929 at Gajanur Tamil Nadu before he was christened 'Rajkumar' for the Karnataka celluloid world by director HLN Simha, who discovered the would-be-matinee idol at a bus depot and signed him as a full fledged hero for the film 'Bedara Kannappa' in 1954.

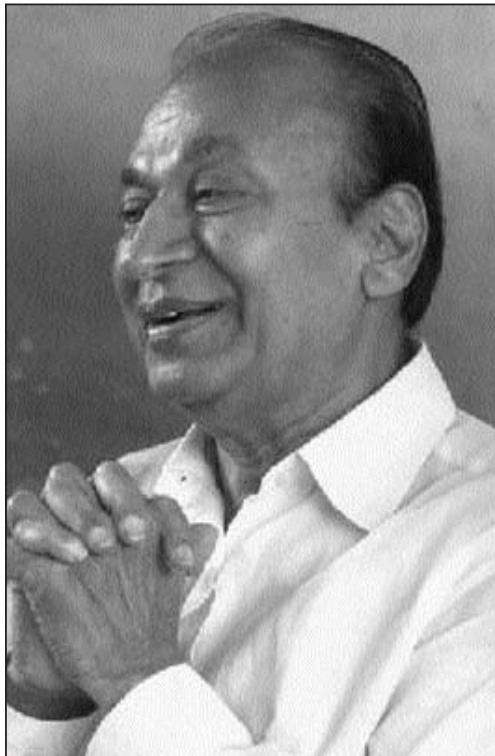
Rajkumar essayed the role of many a mythological character and a historical figure and carried them with ease, be it Bhakta Kumbara, Satya Harishchandra, Bhaktha Cheta, Bhaktha Kanakadasa, 'Ranadheera Kanteerava' (1960) Immedi Pulikesh (1967), Sri Krishnadevaraya (1970) or Mayura (1975). His role as Babruvahana is one that has been etched forever in the memories of filmgoers.

The endearing image of Rajkumar riding a buffalo, singing a popular song in the film Sampattige Saval, brought to the fore the reality of rural India. While his acting prowess singled him out as a super hero, his voice as a playback singer in Sampathige Saval propelled him into the bracket of an ace singer-actor.

From donning diamond studded crowns and silken robes, commanding armies to playing suave roles of an Indian James Bond in films like Jedara Bale opposite actress Jayanti, Rajkumar soon became an icon, single handily delivering box office hits, to the delight of his producers. Having worked with more than 75 directors, his roles have ranged from pages of history to protagonist of films advocating the ageless quality of Indian values.

Despite his box office success, Raj Kumar, a strong advocate of Kannada, confined himself to the Kannada film world.

A champion of the state language, he had time and again espoused the cause of the mother tongue, taking part in the 'Gokak Agitation' in early



1980s, seeking primacy for Kannada. Veerappan, who ironically hailed from the same birthplace as the thespian, was fully aware of the priceless treasure in his custody when he sent out a list of demands to be met in return for the release of the king of films.

It was his subtle acting, spontaneous style and flair for making 'reel life' characters appear 'real life personalities' that helped him survive the onslaught of time, age and changing demands of the celluloid world.

The hysteria whipped up by the icon was perceivable with stories of fans worshipping his replicas with milk and honey in Hassan, of those cycling for kilometres to view the first show of his film and of scores going on a rampage when a cinema house put up a board that tickets could not be bought for love or money for the next seven days, doing the rounds in the media on a regular basis.

The passing away of the idol to many will not mean just the removal of the scene of a star, but that of five eras put together and the new one that lost the opportunity of witnessing a magnum opus with Rajkumar as the lead.

News Agency Reports

City closes down and mayhem prevails



A Corporation Bank ATM with shutters down

RAHUL GHOSH

As soon as news of Kannada film star Dr Rajkumar broke out, the whole look of the city changed in a matter of minutes. Roads got deserted and shops closed down. People were seen garlanding their favorite star's photo in every nook and corner of the city. Some had tears in their eyes whereas some were just enjoying the moment. Motorcyclists zipped by at top speed with flags in the hands of the pillion and some had black bands tied to their foreheads. A two day mourning has been announced in

the city and the body of the star has been kept in the Kanteerava Stadium so that his fans can pay their last respect before he is cremated.

The Indian Oil Corporation Limited petrol bunk in Kengeri Satellite town was shut down. The employees at the bunk said that, their owner had asked them to close down as he was expecting mob violence. Soon motorists were seen crowding the bunk, agitating and forcefully demanding the pump to be opened. Most of them were on their way to pay their respects to Dr Rajkumar.

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IN OTHER NEWS

National

Alwar rape : Accused gets seven years RI

A fast track court in Alwar has sentenced Bitti Mohanty, accused of raping a German student in March, to seven years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000.

Bombay HC lifts ban on dance bars

The Bombay High Court has delivered its verdict on a group of petitions challenging the state's ban on dance bars. The Court has lifted the ban on dance bars.

International

N Korea refuses to rejoin nuke talks

Diplomatic negotiations in Japan have failed to get North Korea to return to stalled six-party talks on the dismantling of its nuclear weapons programme.

Karachi blast kill 57

At least 57 people have died in a suspected suicide bombing at a ceremony to mark the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad's birth in Karachi.

Business

Hero Honda's casual workers on strike

More than 4,000 casual workers at the Hero Honda factory in Gurgaon have gone on strike demanding regularization of services.

Sports

India vs. Eng ODI 6: England win the match by five wickets

England chased the target of 223 runs against India in the Sixth ODI. Andrew Strauss was declared the man of the match for his contribution of 74 runs.

Chanderpaul quits as Windies skipper

Shivnarine Chanderpaul resigned as West Indies cricket captain on Tuesday after spending a disappointing year in the job.

Stock Markets

NSE dropped by 98.45 points and BSE recorded 11,355.24 and dropped by 306.82.

Weather

In south India (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep), weather will be mainly dry over the region except isolated rain/thundershowers over south Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Temperatures likely to increase by 2-3 degrees Celsius over the region.

Dr. RajKumar; the passing of a legend

City closes down



NISHU CHAUDHRY

Mutturaju Singanalluru Puttaswamayya alias Dr. Rajkumar's death has created a void in the Kannada Film industry that can barely be filled. Honoured by Dada Saheb Phalke award for his contribution to the growth of Kannada film industry.

Born on April 24, 1929 in Gajanur, Chamrajnagar, India, Dr. Rajkumar was famous as "Annavru" (big brother) in

Karnataka film industry. He was known as the John Wayne of South Indian cinema among his fan circles. Dr. Rajkumar acted in more than 220 films over a period of 45 years he has set high standards of acting. Bangaaradha Manushya, Kasturi Nivasa were some hits among the long trail of more than 220 movies in which he acted.

A talent less known than his acting was that, he was a brilliant singer. He won the national award for the song naadamaya from the movie 'Jeevana Chaitra.' His singing career started with the song 'yaare koogadali' in the hugely popular movie 'Sampathige Savaal.' Later he went on to sing for most of his movies and for many private albums that were mainly devotional albums.

His song rendition would range from pure classical to disco and fast numbers to pathos. He never smoked or acted as a drunkard in any of his movies (excepting a few in the initial days of his career.) Dr. Rajkumar has remained as the real hero of young Kannadigas. Prudent for his health, Dr. Rajkumar never smoked or drunk in real life too. Rajkumar was the moving force in the Gokak movement that was designed to bring Kannada into forefront.

On July 30, 2000 Tamil bandit and terrorist Veerappan kidnapped Dr. Rajkumar, his son-in-law Govindaraju and two others were from his actors' country cottage at Gajanur in Karnataka. Veerappan was demanding the release of Tamil activists who were being held in jail under a defunct anti-terrorism law. The event shocked the entire country, questions were loud about the efficiency of the Karnataka government.

However, perhaps as a result of prayers by his countless well-wishers, Dr. Rajkumar was released unharmed on November 15, 2000, after 109 days of captivity. The miraculous escape of Dr. Rajkumar was nothing less than a mystery. An already famous actor had become world renowned after his abrupt kidnap and enigmatic release. He had received brilliant opportunities to join state politics but he always shied away from active politics keeping films as the first and last love of his life. The variation of talent he portrayed seems to make it impossible for anyone to equal him in the near future.



The deserted and closed down IOCL petrol bunk in Kengeri Satellite Town. *TWO Photo*

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The pump was opened some time later.

In spite of being an essential service, medical shops also downed their shutters. Venkatesh who had come to the shop to purchase medicine said, "We loved Rajkumar too, but that does not mean you close down medical shops and make life miserable for us." All other shops in the area also closed down. Crowded buses were seen in the most odd time of the day. Apart from all these, even liquor stores have closed down. Some security

guards said that the police had asked them to close down whereas some just closed down as a mark of respect.

ATM services of a number of banks also closed down. The security guards of these said that the management had asked them to pull down the shutters as they expect a mob rampage and did not want their machines or the centers to be damaged.

Suresh, a student of R.V College of Engineering said, "If it is bad today it is going to be worse tomorrow. Our institute has given tomorrow off."

The Weekly Observer

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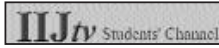
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This is what we have to say

Rajkumar unforgotten

■ Rajkumar's death is inopportune though he was 78 years of age. The legacy he has left behind for the masses and the other actors speak of his enormous contribution to the industry. In an era where even living legends are forgotten, Rajkumar will be a name that will speak the glory of halcyon days of Kannada cinema.

Janani Sampath

The man who brought a smile

■ Rajkumar brings to mind entertaining songs and dance sequences. Even at this moment of sad loss, I cannot help but smile. Not in mockery, but in silent tribute to a man who brought light entertaining moments to many. His echoing lyrics and melody will live on.

Sophia Kikon

Rajkumar and crazy fans

■ I am not a movie buff and I do not follow the film industry business. However, after coming to Bangalore I have been surprised to see how people take film stars and the industry seriously. Kannada movie star Rajkumar tops the list of movie icons for crazy fans in Karnataka. Now, with his passing away, I fear to anticipate his fans' reaction. May his soul rest in peace.

Manpreet K Narula



Young Rajkumar, the adored matinee idol.

Raj Kumar leaves behind thoughts and comments

"He was 'brought dead at 2 O'clock.' Dr Raman Rao, personal doctor with family members had come together.

Prakash
PRO, Ramaiah Hospital

"He was a very veteran actor and also respected. Last year when I was the Chief Minister, we all celebrated his 50th birthday. He had done a lot of services."

Dharam Singh
Former CM

"An era is gone, Rajkumar not only means a lot for 'Karnataka Chitrakala' but also to humanity. He was a great singer and an excellent human being. He had a hold over the psyche of the Kannada audience. He transcended phenomenal barriers to be a great human being. His position cannot be taken for many years at least."

V.N.Subba Rao
A film critic

"It is very sad, but closing shops and everything is not right. The public should not be harassed for this reason."

Manoj Kumar Tiwari
Medical shop owner

"All the offices are closed. People are all going towards his residence to see the dead body. The only problem is controlling the crowd. Apart from that there is absolutely no problem in the city. We have deployed armed forces patrolling in the range. We do not foresee any problem. Absolutely peaceful."

Narayan Gowda
Jt. Commissioner of Police

"I remember the time I met Dr. Rajkumar at a recording studio. He came up and wished me good morning. At lunch time as he was leaving, he actually came across and wished me. I think he was a great, great person. It is a great loss to Karnataka."

Jagadish Raja
Theatre personality

"He was the most beloved hero, what he said, the public did. Tomorrow, there will be even more violence. We have been ordered to be alert and keep closed."

Yusuf Sharif
Security guard

"Now that he is no more, someone will definitely replace him, but it will take time."

Rehman
Provision store owner

"It's like losing a father, he was the father and pride of Karnataka. Such a person can never be replaced."

Nataraj
Shopkeeper