



A CLASS BEYOND BOLLYWOOD

BY EKTA MAKAN

*On the precipice of his sixth decade in the show business, the 82-year-old Dhram Singh Deol, popularly known as **Dharmendra** could give you a lesson on living the life to the fullest*





DHARMENDRA

“DURING HIS INITIAL YEARS OF WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY, HE HAD AN AURA AND A HUGE FAN BASE THAT NO OTHER ACTOR IN THE LEAGUE COULD MATCH”

A proficient actor and a mentor of many, Dharmendra was born in a middle class family in Punjab. He kicked started his career in 1960 with Arjun Hingorani's *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere*. He captivated the heart of millions in the country with his enchanting smile. Considered as the handsomest actor in his days of glory, he was also the most approachable man in the film industry.

The journey started with Dharmendra winning the 'New Talent' contest conducted by Filmfare magazine and, like many other star-struck youngsters he arrived in Mumbai to try his luck in the Hindi film industry. After *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere*, many films like '*Soorat Aur Seerat*', '*Bandini*' and '*Anpadh*' saw the making of a romantic hero opposite many popular actresses of that time.

He tasted his first critical and commercial success in the Bimal Roy-directed '*Bandini*' followed by Kalyani (Nutan), a female prisoner, is torn between two men — Devendra (Dharmendra), the prison doctor, and Bikash (Ashok Kumar).

He recalls the movie as an ideal combination of Bimal Roy and screenplay writer Nabendu Ghosh created '*Bandini*'. "Bimalda was a paternal figure to me and addressed me as Dharmendu. He was a visionary,

a true thinker. The way he worked on me is a lesson I always cherish. My cameo in '*Bandini*' was highly applauded. The entire credit goes to Bimalda who was a great director in the real sense of the term. He died premature which is an irreparable loss to the film industry."

Dharmendra is one of the most celebrated veteran actors in Indian film industry and the fraternity has never skipped a chance to recognize his hard work as he is the recipient of the prestigious Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to Hindi cinema.

CONQUERING THE SHOWBIZ

It was in the year 1997, when Dharmendra received the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award, the legendary Dilip Kumar quipped: "Whenever I get to meet with God Almighty I will set before Him my only complaint — why did you not make me as handsome as Dharmendra?" When asked why he didn't get any Best Actor award in his career, Dharmendra later said: "For me, the greatest award is the love and support of my fans, which I always get. I don't want to comment on why I did not get an award. But I think I deserved it for '*Phool aur Patthar*', '*Satyakam*', '*Chupke Chupke*', '*Pratigya*', '*Sholay*' and '*Naya Zamana*' among several others."

The Government of India also awarded him with India's third highest civilian honor Padma Bhushan. During his initial years of working in the industry, Dharmendra had an aura and a huge fan base that no other actor in the league could match. With a spark in his eyes and confidence in his skill, he charmed the bollywood playing a romantic hero in many films in 1960.

At an early age of 19, Dharmendra got married to Parkash Kaur in the year 1954. He became the father of four utterly talented and successful children, namely Sunny Deol, Bobby Deol, Vijeeta Deol and Ajeeta Deol.

Soon after moving to Mumbai and getting into the film industry and working with some of the most beautiful ladies of his time, Dharmendra met Hema Malini. She was Indian cinema's 'Dream girl', and he was the original He-Man of Bollywood, the next thing in cards was a sizzling love story of two people with drop-dead gorgeous looks and charisma.



THE POWER-COUPLE

With inhibitions at the beginning from both Hema Malini and her father who strictly opposed Hema Malini getting married to Dharmendra, but their love was eternal and they tied the knot in 1980. The romantic hero was able to spread his charm on the lady with utmost ease. In an interview Hema Malini said that it was the song, Main Jat Yamla Pagla Deewana, wherein she fell for Dharmendra. She also revealed that it was his cute dance moves in the song, which made her fall in love with him immediately. The marriage blessed the couple of two lovely daughters, Esha Deol and Ahana Deol.

The power couple gave many successful hits to the industry. Dharmendra acted with Hema Malini in as many as 27 movies of which 20 are more popular. Most of these movies were hits which in turn propelled producers to cast

them in romantic films in the 70s. Some of their blockbusters were Sholay, Charas, Aas Paas, Jugnu, Seeta Aur Geeta, The Burning Train, Tum Haseen Main Jawan, Naya Zamana, Sharafat, Raja Jani, Dost, Pratigya, Azaad, Maa, Dream Girl, Chacha Bathija, Dilaagi, Ali Baba Aur Chalis Chor, Samraat, Bhagavat, and the last being a flop, Razia Sultan.

Dharmendra also holds the accolades of being the actor with the most number of hits in Bollywood. He has acted in over 60 films which have gone on to be golden jubilee hits. In addition, he has also acted with the directors who varied with different styles in their film-making.

MAKING A LIFETIME AFFAIR

Having worked with all the leading men and women in his tenure, Dharmendra was said to have a cordial relationship with many. At the sad demise of veteran actor, Vinod Khanna, Dharmendra stated, "Vinod was a very close friend. We worked in several films together; The first one was Mera Gaon Mera Desh in which Vinod played a villain. He was a man full of life. There is nothing which can replace his absence in my life. He will always be missed."

Further talking about his experiences with Vinod Khanna, the 81-year-old actor narrated an incident when for a scene he had to hit him. "After filming the scene when I met him in the evening, I saw injury marks on his back but when I asked him about it, he said it is nothing since it is their job and they had to shoot the scene. Such was his dedication towards his work." Dharmendra also revealed that Vinod was a man of his words and always followed his heart. He never lost faith in himself and completed everything he took in hands.

He feels, he will now opt only for author-backed mature and substantial characters.

Dharmendra has always been full of life. He has celebrated his tenure as an actor and a father to the fullest. At times the camera has seen his emotional streak at the wedding of his daughters. At the marriage of his youngest daughter, Ahana Deol, he was quoted that all his children are happily settled in life and he feels blessed to have a family that stood by him in all odds.