

**Dimple Kapadia: A talent wasted?**  
**Her marriage to superstar Rajesh Khanna confined her**  
**to the household during the prime of her career, but,**  
**Dimple sprung back**  
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Raj Kapoor was the leading showman of India during the 1950s and a master lover too. A married man, he got in a romantic relationship with his co-star Nargis and the unmarried Nargis responded with sincerity that is expected of a woman from the Indian society.

However, when it was time to confront the fact of marrying Nargis or rejecting her in favour of his orthodox domestic life, Raj Kapoor spurned Nargis' offer and saved his family life.

This resulted in a lot of introspection and the consequent tension and turmoil told on his performance as an actor. The frustrations in his life led to excessive dependence on whiskey. The much-admired hero of films such as 'Barsaat', 'Awara', 'Aah', 'Shri 420' and 'Chori Chori' could not repeat his superb acting in subsequent films. Although in some films like 'Anari', 'Jis Desh Main Ganga Behti Hai' and 'Sangam', he kept pulling along due to the momentum generated in his earlier days of super stardom.

However, when he undertook the most ambitious project of his life, 'Mera Naam Joker', he looked obese, tired, run-down and lacklustre. The cine-goers gave a resounding no to this film. He lost money in this venture and became a dejected man.

After 'Mera Naam Joker', Raj Kapoor went into a pensive, contemplative mood. After a prolonged period of self-introspection, Raj Kapoor eventually convinced himself that he is no longer fit for the role of a modern-day hero. So he decided to find younger actors and actresses for his production house RK Studios. Raj Kapoor groomed his sons as heroes, and for female roles, he had to seek talent elsewhere in the vast city of Bombay. He had already decided to feature his younger son Rishi Kapoor in his next venture 'Bobby'. But when he interviewed a 16-year-old girl Dimple Kapadia, his search for the heroine ended there and then.

'Bobby' released in 1973 was a runaway success. It was one of the highest grossing Indian movies of the year. After the unprecedented success of this movie, Dimple Kapadia had barely entered the minimum age for marriage that Rajesh Khanna, the reigning superstar of Hindi cinema, offered her a proposal to marry him. Dimple was too young and naive, she could not muster enough courage to refuse the marriage proposal and the wedding bells started ringing loud in the capital of the Indian film industry.

On screen, Rajesh Khanna used to flirt with heroines, but, the atmosphere in his home was very conservative, typical of a conventional New Delhi-based Punjabi Khatri family. When Dimple could have ruled over the hearts of cinema going public, she was confined to the four walls of the Khanna household. Like an ordinary Punjabi housewife, she also went the family way. Watching films in isolation, Kapadia would envy actresses dominating the film world. Dimple was young, beautiful and talented, but unable to work in films. This led to frustrations and psychological ups and downs. Culturally, she was certainly not Punjabi.

After years of being confined to the chores of Punjabi domestic life, Dimple decided to break free from the bondages of the typical family life and resolved to stand on her own feet. The divorce was painful for both Rajesh and Dimple. But that was the way the couple was destined to go. But the years of isolation in the Khanna household deprived Kapadia of scores of plum roles in the filmworld of India. Her most productive teens and the early 20s were lost.

During the Eighties, Kapadia once again paired with Rishi Kapoor in 'Sagar'. This film too had a very successful run, but, in terms of viewership, it could not compete with 'Bobby'. Then came some less successful films, but, Dimple had lost the best years of youth, charm and vigour. At one time Dimple Kapadia was linked to Sunny Deol. The rumours did disturb both Dimple and Sunny, but, they decided to take the tabloid stories in stride and move on.

Today in her Fifties, Dimple still looks very graceful. She has maintained the charm of her face and figure as well as she can. Though she acts in very few movies, she is taken note of in every movie. Some youngsters say that if you want to love a middle-aged woman, Dimple is the only one whom you can fall in love with, without regretting the romance.

It is nice to see that Dimple still maintains friendly relations with ex-husband Rajesh Khanna. She has been seen campaigning for Khanna and friends like Vinod Khanna in the elections.

In her latest release, 'Patiala House', once again Dimple was paired with Rishi. Both were shown as an old Sikh couple settled in England, looking very graceful and in acting, definitely eclipsing the younger actors.

Dimple still looks extremely graceful and her acting skills have also not diminished. We wish her a long successful life as an actress and as a woman of substance.

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