

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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GURU DUTT (1925-1964)

LIFE

Guru Dutt (whose birth-name was Vasanth Kumar Shivashankar Padukone) is one of the most famous names in the history of Indian cinema. Equally admired as a director and an actor, he also produced many of his own films, such as *Thirsty (Pyaasa, 1957)* and *Paper Flowers (Kaagaz ke Phool, 1959)*. Guru Dutt was born into an educated, Kannada-speaking family, whose father was a headmaster and mother was a part-time writer. While still young, he was sent to Calcutta for schooling and in 1941 joined a cultural centre in the Himalayas established by Uday Shankar, an acclaimed dancer of both the classical and modern repertoire. That training led him, a few years later, to his first job in the film industry as a choreographer with the Prabhat Studio in Pune, not far from Bombay. In 1947, when that studio folded, he moved to Bombay and directed his first film in 1951. That film, *Baazi*, introduced the Dutt film style, which integrated Hollywood narrative elements with Indian elements of song and dance. Soon thereafter he met and married his wife, a playback singer, Geeta Roy. He then acted in and directed a string of hits before the disappointment of *Paper Flowers* in 1959, from which he never recovered in personal or professional terms. His wife separated from him, as did his lover, and Guru Dutt fell into a spiral of drink and depression. His death was caused by alcohol and sleeping pills, but whether by accident or design is not clear.



(Guru Dutt and his wife, Geeta Dutt)

ACHIEVEMENTS

Several of Dutt's films are regularly included in various '100 best films of all times' lists and he is often found in lists of the world's best directors.

LIST OF FILMS (as director)

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| <i>Baazi</i> | 1951 |
| <i>Jaal</i> | 1952 |
| <i>Baaz</i> | 1953 |
| <i>Aar-Paar</i> | 1954 |
| <i>Mr and Mrs '55</i> | 1955 |
| <i>Sailaab</i> | 1956 |
| <i>Thirsty, Pyaasa</i> | 1957 |
| <i>Paper Flowers, <u>Kaagaz Ke Phool</u></i> | 1959 |