

## Saeed Jaffrey: Actor who straddled disparate worlds



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Rini Kakati 12 December 2015 24409 views

Saeed Jaffrey, was an Indian-born British actor whose versatility and fluency in multiple languages allowed him to straddle radio, stage, television and film in a [career](#) that spanned [over](#) six decades and more than a hundred and fifty British, American and Indian movies. He is one of the few actors who [found](#) fame and [success](#) in both [India](#) and the West. Saeed Jaffrey - who has died at the age of 86 - was a versatile, charismatic and hugely popular star. The pleasure of knowing Saeed Jaffrey was that he was at least [as](#) great an entertainer in real life [as](#) he was on radio, television, stage and film.

I remember meeting Saeed for the first time few years back in London. When my mother came to visit me. [One](#) MID-AFTERNOON, we were at Piccadilly, [as soon as](#) we entered Harrods Saeed came to my mother asked in Hindi "Aap Assam se Aye Hai?". "[Bhupen Hazarika](#) mera dost hai" . [As](#) my mother was wearing Mekhla Chadar. He appreciated and said namaste. He kissed me and embraced me on both cheeks. I told my mother he is a well-known actor of [India](#). He said good bye and exchanged phone numbers. Ever since we became good friends especially through Brent Indian Association. Because each time whenever I organize [Assamese](#) function at Brent Indian Association he and Jennifer supported us. He told me he loved Assam, its culture and [Bhupen Hazarika](#). He called my name "Begum Assam".

He was a multifaceted actor whose flair & versatility will always be remembered. A very cultured, sophisticated & a great actor. I had a great association with Saeed Saab & Jennifer through various meetings and functions. at Brent Indian Association. He was such a fabulous person. So well read and wise. [As](#) an actor, he was a pioneer and was the first true crossover Asian actor who worked in Hollywood with top stars like Sean Connery and Michael Caine and open the floodgates for other Asian and Indian actors.

His performance in the BBC classic Gangsters (1975) ([TV](#)) [as](#) "Rafiq" earned him countrywide recognition in the United Kingdom. This was even though he had acted in Theatres and appeared on television previously in the U.K. In `1999 he appeared in British soap in ITV Channel : Coronation Street [as](#) corner [shop](#) owner Ravi Desai. This was a very popular serial in ITV and we were all waiting for [7](#):30 evening to watch the programme.

He is known [over](#) the world for his impeccable English accent, his dapper style and his catch phrase "My dear boy". They form part of an acting persona that audiences have always [found](#) enchanting. He uses his smooth charm to good effect whether he is playing the archetypal oily, corrupt businessman or the kindly, knowing, [father](#) like figure. He is the first Asian to have received British and Canadian Academy [Award](#) nominations for acting, and is the first ever to be awarded the Order of the British Empire for his services to drama.

During the 1980s and 1990s he was considered to be Britain's highest-profile Asian actor, thanks to his leading roles in the movie My Beautiful Laundrette (1985) and television series Tandoori Nights (1985-1987) and Little Napoleons (1994)

Saeed Jaffrey has two careers: he's well-known in Britain, and he's huge in [India](#). Jaffrey is moist, engaging, round: he leaks expressiveness from every pore.

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Rini Kakati

London, UK

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