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He recovered after a serious illness only when his son took him to his Prasad Studios

Film maker L V Prasad's birth centenary celebrations brought together ace figures of the Indian film industry



Ramesh Prasad with actor Kamal Hassan at the function

"It was my dream to grow into an LV Prasad"



K Balachander, Sowcar Janaki and Saroja Devi.

FOR the distinguished stars from filmdom who gathered at Chennai Trade Center on Thursday evening, it was an evening to revel in the memories and experiences they had with the legendary film maker LV Prasad. The occasion: the legend's birth centenary celebrations.

His passion for the arc lights drove LV Prasad away from home in the 1930s to a city he was new to - Bombay and speaking a language he didn't know - Hindi. But his love for cinema, which took him to greater echelons in the years that came, found admirers for him in the guests of the evening: directors K Balachander, Maniratnam, Dasari Narayana Rao, actors Kamal Hasan, Jithendra, Sowcar Janaki, Saroja Devi, Anjali Devi, and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu himself, who'd penned the dialogues for three of LV Prasad's movies: *Manohara*, *Iruvar Ullam* and *Thaavilla Pillai*.

"When I started out as a director, it was my dream to grow into an LV Prasad 45 years later," said ace director K Balachander, who directed LV Prasad's box office hit *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. Speaking about LV Prasad's unique approach to movie-making, KB said LVP did not harbour negative ideas and themes for making a movie, which is a clear contrast of today's standards, when directors often resort to portraying negative ideas.

Saroja Devi, who acted in LV Prasad's *Beti Bete*, recounted the interesting experience when he promptly handed over an extra sum he agreed to pay

her if *Beti Bete* ran for a 100 days. Sowcar Janaki, who got her first name after she was introduced in his movie *Sowcar*, credited LV Prasad completely for making an actor of her, "who was straight from the kitchen to the camera." Actor Jeethendra, on his part, said LVP was the man who shaped his destiny in filmdom.

To Kamal Hassan, LV Prasad was a mentor like his other guru K Balachander himself. He recalled the instance when LV Prasad said Kamal Hassan was justified in asking for the salary he'd demanded, after seeing him run errands for KB during the shoot of *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. LVP was so passionate about cinema that he recovered after a serious illness only when his son took him to his Prasad Studios, he added. Incidentally, LVP's last movie as an actor was Kamal Hassan's first production venture and 100th movie as an actor - *Raja Parvati*.

An actor, producer and director, LV Prasad's contributions to the film industry are enormous. He acted in the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara*, the first Telugu talky *Bhakti Prahlada* and the first Tamil talky *Kalidasa*. He was also the first to bring graphic machines into the country. "He was born in Andhra Pradesh, worked for most part of his life in Mumbai, but it was Chennai that was close to his heart, which is why most of the Prasad establishments are based here," said Ramesh Prasad, son of the film maker.

— Sharadha Narayanan