

मुझे याद करनेवाले...



A Tribute to Madan Mohan

ONE DAY SEMINAR ON MADAN MOHAN

17TH July 2005

Multi Purpose Hall, Training School Hostel, Anushaktinagar Mumbai-400 094.

Madan Mohan: An Introductory Overview

Madan Mohan Kohli, better remembered as Music Director Madan Mohan was born on 25th June 1924 at Baghdad where his father Raibahadur Chuni Lal worked as an accountant general with Iraq Police. Madan Mohan returned to Punjab and when he was around 11 years old, his father moved to Bombay to join Himansu Rai in Bombay Talkies. Later on, he was a partner for Filmistan and became a well-recognized personality in the Film industry in those days. Not much is known regarding Madan Mohan's childhood and younger days. At a very young age, he joined the Army (under British control at that time) and in 1943 he received an emergency commission. As Lieutenant, he could fire with rifles, mortars, hand grenades and Tommy guns. On the other hand, he could play sitar, sarangi and sarod with equal felicity. His passion for music finally made him quit the dreary army job and join All India Radio Lucknow as an arranger of classical music programs. It is not known whether Madan Mohan had taken a formal Training in music. However, at Lucknow he enjoyed the association of renowned classical music and ghazal/thumri singers such as Ustaad Faiyaz Khan, Roshan Ara Beghum, Siddheshwari Devi, Talat Mahmood and others. He was particularly influenced by the singing style of Barkat Ali Khan and Beghum Akhtar.

After a stay at Lucknow for a few years, Madan Mohan came to Bombay and initiated efforts for making a career in films. Along with Lata Mangeshkar, who was also at the beginning of her career as a singer at that time, Madan Mohan sang a duet under the music direction of veteran composer Ghulam Haider. This song '*pinjare mein bulbul band hain, mali chhod de re*' was to be picturised as a brother-sister song for film 'Shaheed' (1947). However, the song was rejected by the Filmistan authorities and Madan Mohan could not make his debut as a playback singer. Subsequently, he worked as an assistant to reputed music director Shyamsundar. In 1950, he got his first break. He was assigned the responsibility of composing music for the film 'Aankhen' made by Devendra Goyal. For some reasons, Lata Mangeshkar could not sing for 'Aankhen'. She sang for him in his next films, 'Ada' and 'Madhosh' released in 1951. this marked the beginning of a legendary singer-composer pair. With the availability of Lata's divine voice for Madan Mohan's exquisite tunes, his creative genius led to the creation of several outstanding songs during his further career.

In the early fifties, it was an uphill task for any new composer to establish himself. Film industry was extremely fortunate to have had a big list of music directors of highest calibre. This was the time when the veteran composers such as Naushad, Anil Biswas, C. Ramachandra, S.D. Burman, Shankar Jaikishan and others were all at the peak of their performance. The environment was challenging and the competition was stiff but healthy. It was during this period that Madan Mohan

created some superb compositions in films Aashiyaana, Dhun, Baaghi, Nirmohi, Railway Platform, Bhai Bhai and others. If one analyses the film music from 1950 onwards, one can clearly see that after every four-five years, the style of music changed. This was quite logical as every composer tried to innovate and create 'something new' to command the respect of film music lovers.

Around 1958, Madan Mohan's music took a new turn. For the film 'Adaalat', Madan Mohan composed three landmark ghazals and they earned him a new reputation of 'Ghazal Master'. This was really not a new thing to happen because many music directors had composed ghazals for films since several years. Madan Mohan's obsession for Ghazal was known from his Lucknow days. In fact, right from 'Aankhen', he had composed several ghazals for his films prior to 'Adaalat'. However, these ghazals were not in a traditional form and were primarily composed as love songs. Ghazals from 'Adaalat', however were picturised as 'Kothi songs' and hence they were more 'traditional ghazals' so to say. The impact of these ghazals was tremendous. Hence, 'Adaalat' can be considered as a major landmark in Madan Mohan's career. Right from beginning, his compositions had a strong base of Indian classical music. His vast knowledge of classical music and a variety of musical instruments enabled him to establish his own unique style of compositions. Famous Music Director R.D. Burman gave the ultimate tribute to Madan Mohan by stating: *"Madan Mohan had a gharana of his own in Hindi film music. It is a lesson to youngsters like me that he had used Indian classical music as the base for his tunes and made them popular"*.

One more consequence of the success of his music for 'Adaalat' was that there was an increased expectation from him for ghazal like songs. While meeting this expectation, he also strived to give a broad variety of music. Hence, in addition to the classical based songs including thumris and ghazals, he also composed songs based on folk music, quawallis, light romantic songs as well as songs based on western music, with equal elegance. Madan Mohan in the sixties appears to be a very matured and a very confident composer. He had already established a special slot for himself among the top ranking composers. Year 1964 can be considered to be the climax of his career. In this single year, eight films having music composed by Madan Mohan were released. It is not merely the number but the quality and variety that are more important. This set of films includes Jahan Ara, Woh Kaun Thi, Haqueekat and Ghazal, all of which had top class music. Woh Kaun Thi, a suspense movie, was his first silver jubilee hit. By this time, Madan Mohan's music had made a distinct impression on a country wide listener community. It had earned him the respect from connoisseurs and even legendary singers like Beghum Akhtar and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. It had gained him popularity among the masses also. But, he had not yet received a formal recognition in the form of any award. The main reason for this apparent injustice was that most of his films turned out to be flop on box office though the music received its due recognition. Another

important reason was that Madan Mohan rarely got an opportunity to compose music for big banner films. He was thus forced to work mainly with second grade producers/directors. He composed music for just a few films starring celebrity actors such as Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand. He did not compose any songs for a Dilip Kumar film. There is another finer aspect of Madan Mohan's compositions. His songs, particularly those rendered by Lata Mangeshkar, were quite complex and difficult to sing. So it might well have happened that songs became popular a little later and could not lead the film to success. In spite of this, Madan Mohan's efforts were rewarded later when in 1970, he received the President's award for best music for film 'Dastak'.

The ambience in film industry changed considerably from late sixties and the music became increasingly more commercial. The emphasis shifted to instant popularity and dominance of western music. As a result, many music directors of the previous era got side tracked. Madan Mohan was one composer of the earlier classy generation who got a few big banner films like Bawarchi & Mausam during the early seventies. His excellent music for these films is still remembered and enjoyed. However, by this time, he had already become a victim of frustration. He was a man of principles and preferred to stand erect even in adverse and hostile surroundings. He continued to compose melodies based on classical music with the same spirit, though his health was deteriorating rapidly. On 14th July 1975, merely at the age of 51, he took his last breath and film music lost a highly talented composer forever.

Apart from his career as a music director, Madan Mohan had many more facets in his personality. He had a great interest in sports. He played cricket and tennis in younger years. He was an excellent cook. Making new recipes and enjoying them with friends was his hobby. His interest in classical music was not limited only to composing songs. He used to religiously attend classical music concerts. He was a regular attendee of the '*Sawai Gandharva Punyatithi*' concert, which is annually held at Pune. He also used to enjoy 'Bombay Racecourse' for a change. In essence, he was a person who enjoyed life in a healthy and positive manner. However, at work he was a tough taskmaster. He would never tolerate mediocrity and recording of a Madan Mohan song was never a simple task. Even a slightest mistake of a musician would guarantee a 'retake'. At the same time, he was kind at heart and was highly emotional. Any bad news about his friends would leave him in tears.

Any narration on Madan Mohan would not be complete without the mention of 'Lata Mangeshkar'. Right from the time when they first sang together, he considered Lata as her sister and for her too, he was 'madanbhaiya'. These two great artistes shared an enormous respect for each other's talent. Lata was Madan Mohan's strong forte. His creativity knew no bounds when he was sure that Lata is there to sing and this was witnessed right from '*Pritam Meri Duniya Mein*' in 'Ada' till '*Mushkil hai jeena bedardonki duniyamein*' in 'Sahib Bahadur'.

Ironically, the story of Madan Mohan does not end with his death. He is one composer whose popularity has actually increased after he left this world. For competing younger singers – many of whom are born after Madan Mohan's death – singing a Madan Mohan composition means a challenge and the number of such singers appears to be on the rise. To see these youngsters yearning to sing Madan Mohan songs in the same best manner as the original singers did is certainly a welcome sight. It is said that an artiste remains alive till his creations are enjoyed by connoisseurs. Madan Mohan is just proving this point! May be it was god's wish that Madan Mohan should be remembered more and respected even more after his death!

V.M. Joshi

Madan Mohan & Rajinder Krishan: An Unforgettable Composer – Lyricist Duo

Several experts and noted critics on film music have written so far a lot of articles on the works and specialties of music director Madan Mohan. Articles reviewing the finer aspects of singer – composer combinations such as Lata Mangeshkar – Madan Mohan or Mohammed Rafi – Madan Mohan have also been published. However, critical appraisals of contributions of composer – lyricist combinations are relatively few. Almost every memorable song, apart from its exquisite tune and fine music, also features an equally remarkable lyric. With such an angle, a review of the joint work of Madan Mohan and Rajinder Krishan deserves a due consideration. A straightforward reason for this is that Rajinder Krishan alone has written lyrics for almost 40% of the songs for which the music was composed by Madan Mohan. While teaming together, these two great artistes have created a large number of memorable and melodious songs.

Though the origin of Madan Mohan – Rajinder Krishan duo dates back to year 1952 when they created the songs for 'Aashiyaanaa', this pair came into prominence during the period 1956-59. Madan Mohan composed some outstanding tunes for films like 'Bhai Bhai', 'Dekh Kabira Royaa', 'Pocketmaar', 'Gateway of India', 'Chacha Zindabad' and 'Adaalat' during this period. All the songs from these films were written by Rajinder Krishan who seems to have had an uncanny knack of composing lyrics expressing vivid emotions in simple but effective words. It appears that words – be they simple Hindustani or genuine and rich Urdu – were awaiting at his fingertips, ready to occupy their appropriate positions in his verses.

Legendary poet Shelley has expressed an eternal truth in his words 'Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought'. Veteran Hindi film lyricist Shailendra has echoed the same reality in his famous song '*hain sabse madhur woh geet jinhen hum dard ke sur mein gaate hain*'. Sad songs from films have always been immensely admired by connoisseurs. Madan Mohan is best remembered for his composition of sad songs or '*virahinees*'. In such songs, the lyrical contribution of Rajinder Krishan is highly noteworthy. His words sound very soulful while expressing the grief and sorrow experienced by the character in the film (either heroine or hero) who becomes a victim of rejection by the beloved. For instance, consider the song '*Hum pyaar mein jalanewalon ko chain kahan*' from 'Jailor'. Both, the leading verse (i.e. the *mukhdaa*) and the stanzas (i.e. the *antaraas*) of this memorable song are highly emotional. While describing the helpless efforts of the heroine to recover from traumatic state, he writes –

*Behelaye jab dil na behele to aise behelaye
gham hi to hai pyaar ki daulat ye kehkar samjhaye
apana man chhalane walon ko chain kahan, haaye aaram kahan'.....*

Considering grief as the wealth of love is highly poetic ! This song is a classic example where the feelings, the words, the tune and the background music are very smoothly blended. The resulting composition, sung superbly by Lata Mangeshkar makes the song immortal.

The sad mood consequent to a frustrated love affair can have different shades and depths depending on the situation in the film. A quick review of Rajinder - Madan '*virahinees*', would clearly depict these different moods as can be seen from '*Meri aankhonse koi neend liye jaata hai*' (Lata in '*Pooja Ke Phool*'), '*Un aankhonmein neend kahan jin aakhonse preetam door base*' (Lata in '*Minister*'), '*Ashkonse teri hamne tasweer banayee hai*' (Asha in '*Dekh Kabira Roya*') as an illustration.

Rejection by the loved one or close ones can have a very serious impact on the male lover. A Hindi films, hero in such a situation, invariably yields to the battle of wine. An attempt to dump the sorrow in wine certainly leads to a disaster in practical life but in films, it serves as a dramatic event and is usually cleverly exploited by good directors. Rajinder Krishan wrote a song for a similar situation for film '*Sharaabi*'. The wording of one antaraa of this song is :

*'Kisine mera dil na dekha, Na dil ka paigaam suna
mujhko bas aawaara samjha, jisne meraa naam suna
abtak to sabne thukaraayaa, koi to paas bithaayegaa
apana mujhe banaayega, dil mein mujhe basayegaa
Kabhi na kabhi, kahin na kahin, koi na koi to aayega'.....*

The loneliness and feelings of dejection have been expressed very effectively by Rajinder Krishan. Hearing this song in silence, particularly at night, leaves the listener spell bound. In addition to the feelings of depression predominant in the song, there is also an inherent ray of hope, which is a characteristic of a typical Rajinder Krishan lyric. The real effect of the song is obviously due to an excellent teamwork. Words full of emotions, soulful tune, soft but effective background music and superb rendition by singer Mohammad Rafi have culminated into a masterpiece composition.

Madan Mohan is renowned for his style and elegance for composing ghazals for films. Lata Mangeshkar described him as '*Ghazalonka Shehjada*'. Ghazal, - basically a love songs - is a highly popular form of Urdu poetry. In a ghazal, the mukhdaa as well as each antaraa should each consist of couplets only i.e. they all must be '*shers*'. The leading *sher* (i.e. the *mukhdaa*) is known as '*Matla*'. All the *shers* must follow some specific rules of rhyming, viz. '*Radeef*' and '*Kaafiya*' and must have approximately same number of words in each line (i.e. each lines must be of same '*beher*'). Typically a ghazal embodies deep emotions with attractive lyrics. The ghazal as a lyrical genre, originated in the 10th century from Arabic poetry. It came to India with the advent of Muslim influence from 12th century onwards and enjoyed a royal support for several centuries. However, as a musical

genre, it became more popular in the 19th century. The light classical ghazal underwent a transition from court and courtesan salon to public concert hall. With the advent of songs in movies, ghazal entered film music. Madan Mohan had an immense fascination for ghazals, which got nurtured with his very close association with veteran *ghazal* – *thumri* singers such as Begum Akhtar, Barkat Ali Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Talat Mahmood etc. during his stay at Lucknow around 1945-46. He was also planning to compose music for films during this time. Thus it might be possible that at this stage itself he conceptualized on ghazal as his style of music for films. Rajinder Krishan has written some outstanding ghazals for Madan Mohan. The most prominent among them are the three all time great ghazals from 'Adaalat' which, in fact, established Madan Mohan as a 'Ghazal King'. The poetic value of Rajinder Krishan's ghazals is very well known. As an illustration, just consider the following:

*'Gharse chale the hum to khushee ki talaash mein
gham raah mein khade the woh hi saath ho liye
khud dilse dil ki baat kahi aur ro liye
yoon hasaratonke daag mohabbat mein dho liye* (Lata, in 'Adaalat')

or

*'Marne ki aarzoo mein hum jee rahe hain aise
jaise ki laash apni khud hi koi uthaaye
... jab jab thumhen bhulaaya tum aur yaad aaye
jaate nahin hain dilse abtak tumhare saaye* (Lata & Asha in 'Jahan Ara')

The listing can of course go on and on. The illustrative compositions clearly show the calibre of Rajinder Krishan as a ghazal writer. On his part, Madan Mohan has adorned these lyrics with sublime tunes based on different '*raagas*' in order to portray the inherent mood of each ghazal. For example, '*Unko ye shikaayat hai*' (Lata in 'Adaalat') is based on *raga* *Malgunjee*, '*Haal-e-dil unhen yoon sunaaya gayaa*' (Lata in 'Jahan Ara') is in '*Miya Malhar*', and '*Tu Pyaar Kare ya Thukaraaye*' (Lata in 'Dekh Kabira Roya') is composed in *Bhairavi*.

A frustrated love affair can lead to different types of end results. Once the harsh truth of separation is realized, some persons resort to introspection and become philosophical. Rajinder Krishan has written a highly emotional song that expresses such frozen feelings of sorrow, frustration and helplessness. The wording of this somewhat serious song is:

*Pyaar kya hota hai samjhaye koi
Banake gamkhar to aaye koi
Raasta kisliye hum poochhate hain jab ki apni koi manzil hi nahi
Ek thehere hue dariya ki tarah jindagi mein koi hulchul hi nahi
Pyaar kya hota hai*

The tune composed by Madan Mohan for this sad but philosophical lyric is just the right one for the mood of the song and it highlights the emotions built in the words. The background music is soft and the antaraas are more prose like. This is logical because such feelings do not imply 'singing' *per se*. The song is soulful and can be fully relished when heard in a silent ambience. Undoubtedly, this song is a rare gem intended for a matured and classy audience and it is no wonder that this is not a very popular song.

Film songs depict all human moods and feelings. This is quite natural because the stories shown on silver screen are a reflection of day-to-day life experienced by all of us. Thus the moments of happiness and pleasure are also encountered in films. A talented lyricist would naturally compose lyrics aptly fitting such situations. Rajinder Krishan has written several such songs. For instance, consider the song situation in 'Bhai Bhai'. The heroine here is a devotee of her husband (a traditional Indian *pativrata*), mother of a pretty child and has all the worldly pleasures at her disposal. She is truly at the peak of happiness. While describing the feelings of this woman and her reverence to her husband, Rajinder Krishan writes:

*Chhodke main tuze koi jannat na loon
Tere badlemein duniyaki raunak na loon
Meri pooja piya tera deedar hai
Mera chhotasa dekho ye sansar hai
Mera jeevan hai ye mera singaar hai*

This song is a classic example that illustrates the immense ability of simple words to express divine thoughts. And then look – rather hear – at the away Madan Mohan has composed the tune for this song! The tune is simply melodious and is backed by a soft background music that exalts the mood. However, the equally beautiful part of this song is a very pleasant humming rendered by the singer Lata Mangeshkar, at the beginning and the end of the song. The very sweet *hmm hmm hm* followed by *la laa la la laa* sung at the beginning of the song elegantly foretells the mood of the song and tunes the mind of the listener so as to enable him to enjoy all the rest that follows.

The happy mood also has several facets and shades. Just as in real life, films also have situations providing ample scope for humour, teasing, naughtiness and funny incidences. Film directors brighten up such situations by introducing songs that enhance such moods. Though Madan Mohan is reputed for composition of sad songs, he has also given a good number of happy mood songs of various types. Rajinder Krishan has played an important role in these endeavours by writing apt lyrics. Take, for instance, the song '*Balama anadi manga de ghodagadi ...*' from 'Pocketmaar'. One stanza reads:

*Jabse bedardi bihake mujhe laaya
 Kab sang apne na cinema dikhaaya
 na cinema dikhaaya na lemon pilaayaa
 Balamaa anadi mangaa de ghodagadi
 ke tum sang ab mera laage na jyaa.*

The words very clearly convey the boldly humorous mood of the heroine. Madanji has composed this comedy song in a fast tempo and used dholak in the background. In spite of somewhat rough words and the overall comic mood, the tune is surprisingly sweet and Lataji's rendition is superb. The upper limit of comic songs can be seen in the duet from 'Chacha Zindabad' viz. '*Bach gaye hum dono fanste fanste, Tera mera chacha zindabad*' sung by Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar. One stanza is worded as

*Kabhi hamaare ghar bhi aana
 Saath mein apne unko laana
 Apne bachchonko bhi laana
 Chai vai peekar jaana
 Soda hai, lemon hai, daal hai, chivda hai
 Puri hai, bhaaji hai, garam garam bhajiya hai
 Badhiya kha le karari gajak*

The innocent humour inherent in the lyric is manifested in an extremely hilarious tune, which is best enjoyed by actually hearing the song. Rough and coarse words such as *chivda*, *bhajiya*, *chai-vai* and so on are very rarely found in songs but Rajinder Krishan has deployed these words in a very effective way and Madan Mohan has done the musical rest to ensure that the song retains its class and innocent humour without sounding cheap.

For the leading actor in film 'Mastaana' Rajinder Krishan wrote a song '*Duniyaake saare gamonse begaana main hoon mastaanaa ho main hoon mastaana*'. The actor here is depicted as a happy-go-lucky type of person who does not worry for anything. The words in the song describe his nature and character. The tune composed by Madan Mohan is also simplistic but the real beauty is the soft whistling that precedes the *mukhadaa*. Here again it is this light whistle that does the magic! It is our everyday experience that a person whistles only when he is in a happy mood or when he is engrossed in his own thoughts and has forgotten about the world around him. The whistle cleverly sets the mood of the song and prompts the listener on what is about to follow.

In film songs, the lyricist rarely gets an opportunity to take recourse to nature! All well known lyricists exploit such opportunities because it is a golden chance to express their poetic creativity whereas most of the other songs are generally written as per the situation's demand. Rajinder Krishan has written one lovely song for 'Jailor'. The *mukhadaa* and the following *antaraa* are as follows:

*Boondaniya barsan laagi re
 Kahe shor machaaye re papeeharaa
 Dhun aisi gaaye man agan lagaaye tan tharak tharak rah jaaye
 Kahe dard jagaay bairi baaag na aaye haye kaun ise samajhaye
 Boondaniya*

Cuckoo's voice sounds very sweet in spring but as soon as the rainy season sets in the same sonorous voice loses all its charm and sounds harsh. Rajinder Krishan dwells upon this natural process and spins it into an excellent lyric. Madanji has composed an equally matching and a melodious tune based on a classical raga. It is indeed unfortunate that this beautiful song did not get its due appreciation from connoisseurs. May be the all round recognition of 'Hum pyaar mein jalnewalonko' had an overshadowing effect on 'Boondaniyaa barasan laagi'.

This review of the contributions of composer – lyricist duo Madan Mohan – Rajinder Krishan, is not complete by any means. However, it is extensive enough to provide an overview of a broad variety of memorable songs created by this unique pair of gifted artistes. There is one more point that also needs to be remembered. Rajinder Krishan was not merely a lyricist. For several films he also wrote the story, script and the dialogues as well. Probably that is the reason why some of his songs had a more realistic situation in the story as he could envisage the whole canvas. Both Madan Mohan and Rajinder Krishan were excellent friends and shared a very good rapport. The fact remains that these two great artistes have performed as an impeccable duo and left behind an invaluable treasure of innumerable melodies only to be savoured by connoisseurs for many many years. It is interesting to note that Mohan is only another name of Lord Krishna and perhaps this deity, which is very well known for its love for music, is the connecting link between Rajinder Krishan and Madan Mohan.

V.M. Joshi

बात कलकी है के फूलों को मचल देते थे
 आज काँटो को भी सीने पे है लिपटाये हुए
 ना हैंसो हमपे जमाने के है ठुकराये हुए
 दर बदर फिरते है तकदीर के बहकाये हुए
