

# Remembering a master composer

The Hindu dated June 22, 1990

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COME mid-July and it will be full 15 years since Madan Mohan departed, leaving behind a tune legacy on which our radio and TV survive to this day. In this 15-year interregnum, we have seen a ghazal wave come and go, sweeping away in its backlash a whole host of pseudo-ghazal exponents.

Vintage performer Jagjit Singh alone comes up still with the occasional composition that reminds you of the sensitivity and fluidity that Madan Mohan brought to the art and craft of toning a ghazal.

There will not be another Lata. And, because there will not be another Lata, there will also not be another Madan.

Madan was born in Baghdad to bring *Baghi* to us in the tenderest Lata hue of: *Hamare baad ab mehfil mein yeh afaane baiyan honge*. Take away Madan and you take away quite a bit of Lata. For which other composers could have gifted to this peerless performer such evergreens as: *Dukhiyare naina dhoondhe piya ko (Nirmohi)*, *Preetam meri duniya mein (Ada)*, *Sapne mein sajan se do baaten (Gateway of India)*, *Hum pyaar mein jalne waalon ko (Jailor)*, *Mukh mod na lena saajana (Ashiana)*, *Sitaron se poochhon nazaron se poochhon (Dhoon)*, *Chaand madham aasmaan chup hai (Railway Platform)*, *Meri veena tum bin roye (Dekh Kabira Roy)*, *Woh jo milte the kabhi (Akeli Mat Jaiyo)*, *Do dil toote do dil haare (Heer Raanjha)*, and *Baiyyan na dharo (Dastak)*.

There are at least ten other master composers whose mellifluous association with Lata can be synthesised in a string of tunes that touch both the heart and the mind. But, where in the case of other composers some cudgelling of the memory is needed, in the matter of identifying the Lata-Madan connection, the mental hook-up is instant.

Yet Madan Mohan was no instant composer. Lata is on record about how hard he drove himself in blending his artistry with her virtuosity. A Madan Mohan recording meant the musicians had to be extra alert. The slightest jarring note and Madan would descend on them with the aggressive charge of: *Besharmon, besura bajate ho!*

When you finally came to hear the two on record, Lata and Madan were in perfect tune. But this was a perfection painstakingly achieved. Even after thoroughly rehearsing Lata before going into the recording-room, Madan was not one to settle for the first take.

Lata had to strive her utmost to attain the standard of perfection demanded by Madan. Only that way, Madan believed, he could get Lata in *Bhai Bhai*, to empathise with something so perceptive as *qadar jaane*

*naa*. Only that way, Madan knew, would Begum Akhtar think it worth while to ring him, in the dead of night, and ask him to sing out on the phone, just once: *qadar jaane naa!*

Take *Tu pyaar kare ya thukraye (Dekh Kabira Roy)*, take *Yun hasraton ke daag (Adalat)*, take *Hai isi mein pyaar ki aabroo (Anpadh)*, take *Agar mujh se mo-*

had to be stunning, since the one was the ghazal king, in the field of singing, and the other the ghazal king in the field of composing.

Right from the time Talat made his first impact through Madan with that *Madhosh* heart-stopper, *Meri yaad mein tum na aansoo bahana*, the two became stamped on our minds.

*mohabbat mein hum ne' (Chhote Babu)*; or *'Yaad jab aaye tum se bulaya na gaya' (Dekh Kabira Roy)*. And, when you get Lata and Talat together under Madan (in *Chhote Babu*), it becomes a duet for romantics to hum for all time. *Teri chamakti aankhon ke aage yeh sitare kuchh bhi nahin!*

To be sure, Mohammad Rafi has sung countless memorable numbers for Madan, ranging from *'Tujhe kya sunaon main dilruba' (Aakhri Dav)* to *'Kabhi na kabhi kahin na kahin' (Sharabi)* to *'Yeh duniya yeh mehfil' (Heer Raanjha)* to *'Tum se kahoon ek baat' (Dastak)*, not to mention numbers in a lighter vein like *'Bada hi CID hai' (Chandan)* and *'Basti basti parbat parbat' (Railway Platform)*.

Likewise, Manna Dey and Madan Mohan may be inseparable in *'Kaun aaya mere man ke dwaare' (Dekh Kabira Roy)*. Kishore Kumar you may get under Madan's baton in a vein either *'Dil dil se mila kar dekho' (Mem Saheb)* or *'Simti si sharmayi si' (Parwana)*.

Mukesh may have sung for Madan in his very first film, *Ankhen*, coming up with the *'Preet laga ke maine kya phal paaya'* hit, and going on, in *Sanjog*, to render: *'Bhuli huyi yaadon mujhe itna na sataao.'* Hemant Kumar may have excelled under madan in *'Kho gaya jaane kahaan arzooon ka jahaan' (mohar)* and *'Le le dard paraya' (Chhote Babu)*. But it is with Talat Mahmood that somehow we associate Madan's male repertoire.

As for his female repertoire, it is but rarely that a Geeta Dutt gets a look-in with *'Ae dil mujhe bata de' (Bhai Bhai)*. Likewise, in his salad years, Madan barely looked at Asha, summoning her for only the very occasional serious number, like *'Ashkon se teri hum ne tasveer banayi hai' (Dekh Kabira Roy)*.

Yes, even for the lighter Madan numbers, it had to be Lata only Lata! And why not, when his lighter output runs like a stream from *Jaa re badra bairi jaa re jaa re (Bahana)* to *'Nainon mein badra chhaye' (Mera Saaya)!* In fact, we had to wait until *Jahanara* to hear, under Madan, Lata and Asha vocally vying to excel each other in *'Jab jab tumhen bhulaya.'*

Same way we had to wait until *Jahanara* to thrill afresh to the voice of Talat under Madan — *'Phir wohi shaam,' 'Main teri nazar ka suroor hoon,' 'Teri aankh ke aansoo pi jao.'*

And what a battle Madan Mohan waged with *Jahanara* writer-director Vinod Kumar to facilitate Talat's vocal comeback with that film. But then Madan waged a battle all through his life, his career was a struggle right through, that is why he could be supremely creative right through his 25 years in films.

Will we see his like again?

— PTI Feature



## Madan Mohan: the making of a legend

*habbat hai (Aap Ki Parchhaiyan)...* and you discern, in every note, that it is not just one professional, Lata, articulating another professional, Madan's, composition.

There is something intensely emotional about a Lata-Madan presentation. The *raakhi* bond between the two makes for levels of creativity that turn the tune into a thing of eternal beauty.

IN the custody of Madan there is perhaps only one other singer who has given matching results: Talat Mahmood! Naturally the results here

May be Talat's Madan compositions number no more than a handful. But such is their 'togetherness' that each Talat-Madan composition has become an experience to savour again and again. When you hear a Lata-Madan creation afresh, you are struck by its renewed impress on your mind. Likewise, a Talat-Madan 'meeting of minds' means a tune to cherish time and time again.

The Madan touch is unmistakable when Talat comes to you in a strain of *'Main paagal mera manva paagal' (Ashiana)* or *'Jise dil mein basana chaha tha' (Ada)*, or *'Do din ki*