

Musical genius beyond compare

Tish Kumar Malhotra pays tribute to Madan Mohan, ghazal king and versatile composer

MADAN MOHAN, the legendary composer of Bollywood, was a unique musician. Born on 25 June 1924 in Baghdad, he learnt the art of composing the most superb music more through instinct than through training. God had endowed him with all that was required to create soul stirring music, and he required only nominal formal education. What he learnt enabled him to dip into his own being and come out with rare gems. In a nutshell, Madan Mohan was a born musician, a genius and the king of ghazal. He left the world at the young age of 51, on 14 July 1975, and no one has been able to take his place.

If you listen to a beautiful song again and again, it sometimes transcends worldly feelings and takes on a divine form. Just listen to Madan Mohan's composition: *Main To Tum Sang Nain Milake* sung by Lata Mangeshkar for the film *Manmauji*. If you replace the word *sajna* with *Krishna* and meditate, you are bound to have a divine experience.

There are also many examples of Madan Mohan's romantic compositions: *Do Ghadi Wob Jo and Sapne Mein Sajar Se Do Batein* (Gateway of India), *Sabase Yeh Kabdo* (Bank Manager), *Aapki Nazron Ne Samjha* (Anpadb), *Main Nigaben Tere Chebre Se* (Aap Ki Parchaiyan), *Zara Si Aabat Hoti Hai* (Haqeeqat), *Meri Aankhon Se Koi Neend Liye Jaata Hai* (Pooja Ke Phool), *Aye Sanam Aaj Yeh Kasam* (Jabanara), *Tumbi To Meri Pooja Ho* (Subagan), *Chhod Kar Tere Pyar Ka Daman* (Wob Kaun Tbi), *Aapne Apna Banaya* (Dulhan Ek Raat Ki), *Yun Rootho Na Haseena* (Neend Hamari Khwab Tumhare), *Tumbari Zulf Ke Saye Mein* (Naumihal), *Ari O Shokh Kaliyo* (Jab Yaad Kishi Aati Hai), *Teri Aankhon Ke Siwa* (Chirag), *Milo Na Tum To Hum Ghabraye* (Heer Raanjha), *Jis Dinse Maine* (Parwana), *Tum Jo Mil Gaye Ho* (Hanste Zakhm), *Husn Hazir Hai* (Laila Majnu), etc.

Madan Mohan knew well how to accentuate overt and covert sensuousness in a song as in *Tu Mere Samne Hai* (Subagan), *Shokh Nazarki* (Wob Kaun Tbi), *Nainon Mein Badra* (Mera Saaya), *Bayan Na Dharo and Tumse Kaboon Ek Baat* (Dastak), and *Simti Si Sharmati* (Parwana). In songs like *Aye Dil Mujhe Bata De* (Bhai Bhai), *Zameen Se Humein Aasman Par*

(Adalat), *Tum Chal Rabe Ho* (Duniya Na Maane), *Aapko Pyar Chhupane Ki*, *Tere Paas Aake* (Neela Aakash), *Ek Haseen Shaam Ko* (Dulhan Ek Raat Ki), *Kabhi Tera Daman Na Chhodenge Hum* (Neend Hamari Khwab Tumhare), *Lo Ek Kali Muskayi* (Ek Kali Muskayi), *Chhai Barkha Babar* (Chirag), *Jab Dekh Liya* (Chirag), *Tere Kooche Mein* (Heer Raanjha), *Yun Na Sharma* (Parwana), *Yeh Maana Meri Jaan* (Hanste Zakhm), *Is Reshmi Pateh* (Laila Majnu) Madan Mohan added flamboyance and buoyancy to romantic numbers to make them more popular among the youth.

When it came to composing songs of pathos he was incomparable as in *Meri Yaad Mein Tum Na* (Madbosh), *Main Pagal Mera* (Aashiana), *Hamare Baad Ab Mehfil* (Bagbi), *Meri Veena and Humse Aaya Na Gaya* (Dekh Kabira Roya), *Yun Hasraton Ke Daag and Jaana Tba Humse Door* (Adalat), *Hum Pyar Mein Jalnewalon Ko* (Jailor), *Bhooli Hui Yaadon* (Sanjog), *Rang Aur Noor Ki* (Ghazal), *Hoke Majboor Mujhe* (Haqeeqat), *Phir Wohi Shaam* (Jabanara), *Kabhi Na Kabhi* (Sharabi), *Naina Barse and Lagia Gale Se* (Wob Kaun Tbi), *Tu Jahan Jahan Chalega* (Mera Saaya), *Na Tum Bewafa Ho* (Ek Kali Muskayi), *Mere Bichhde Saatbi* (Chirag), *Hum Hain Mataaye* (Dastak), *Yeh Duniya Yeh Mehfil* (Heer Raanjha), *Aaj Socha To* (Hanste Zakhm), *Hai Tere Sath Meri Wafa* (Hindustan Ki Kasam), *Rasme Ulfat Ko* (Dil Ki Raaben), *Barbad Mobabbat* (Laila Majnu), *Rabi Tba Main* (Sabib Bahadur), etc. The list is endless.

The eminent lyricists who collaborated with Madan Mohan in his musical journey included Rajinder Krishan, Kaifi Azmi, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Sahir Ludhianvi, Hasrat Jaipuri, Indeever, Naqsh Lyalpur, Gulzar, Kaif Irfani and Qamar Jalalabadi.

The prominent members of his team of music assistants and arrangers were M L Sonik (of Sonik-Omi fame), Ghanshyam Sukhwil, Gyan Verma, R L Suri, Bipin-Babul, Sunny Castello, Chic Chocolate, V Balsara, Anthony Gonsalves and Kersi Lord. They provided able assistance to Madan Mohan in creating and sustaining his unique style of music, which has stood the test of changing techniques of orchestration.



Madan Mohan composed music for 93 released and 12 shelved Hindi films but he was deprived of success in terms of recognition via popular awards. This caused him great anguish and the resultant frustration became the cause of his untimely death. He, however, got the National Award for Best Music Director for *Dastak* (1970). The other awards conferred on him were Sur Singar Sansad's Swami Haridas Awards for two successive years; the Andhra Pradesh Film Journalists Award for the best music direction for the film *Anpadb* (1962) and Uttar Pradesh Film Journalists Award for the best music direction for the film *Dil Ki Raaben* (1973).

This was too little, too late for a versatile musician who had provided unmatched melody. The damage had already been done for the self-made man who did not want even his father, Chunilal Kohli, a founding member of Bombay Talkies and Filmistan Studios, to recommend his case to any producer or director. All offers came to Madan Mohan because of his merit and talent and all that he achieved was because of his innovative brilliance. Who can forget the sound of currency coins showered by audiences in theatres when the song *Is Reshmi Pateh Ki Zhanak Key Sadkey* (Laila Majnu) would come on the screen? This was the true award for Madan Mohan. But alas, he was not there to see this grand spectacle. He had already left the world before *Laila Majnu* hit the screens.

Thirty-three years after his death Yash Chopra and Sanjeev Kohli, the elder son of Madan Mohan, created history of sorts. They brought back Madan Mohan to the world of Hindi film music. *Veer-Zaara*, produced and directed by Yash Chopra and starring Shahrukh Khan, Preity



LEGENDS MEET: Lata Mangeshkar with Madan Mohan

Zinta and Rani Mukherjee, had nine songs based on Madan Mohan's many unheard compositions which are in his family's possession. Javed Akhtar penned the lyrics and Sanjeev Kohli recreated the music as Madan Mohan probably would have done. Lata Mangeshkar, Udit Narayan, Sonu Nigam, Ahmed & Mohammed Hussain and Gurdas Mann sang the songs. Two songs, one a solo and another a duet by Lata Mangeshkar and Jagjit Singh, though not appearing in the film, were specially added to the album. The film and the music achieved grand success. So Madan Mohan came back to claim what was always due to him. The young generation had a taste of Madan Mohan's music. *Veer-Zaara* also inspired them to look around for the rich repertoire of songs that Madan Mohan left behind. Though the great duo of Lata Mangeshkar and Madan Mohan produced many immortal hits, Mohammed Rafi, Asha Bhosle, Talat Mahmood and Manna Dey also added many gems to the collection. Mukesh, Mahendra Kapoor, Geeta Dutt, Shamshad Begum, Bhupinder Singh, among others, also received their fair share from the immortal music of Madan Mohan.

In fact, it was Madan Mohan who brought Bhupinder Singh from Delhi and gave him the chance to sing his first song *Hoke Majboor Mujhe*

with legends Mohammed Rafi, Manna Dey and Talat Mahmood. No one can ever forget the haunting number *Dil Dboondta Hai Phir Wahi* sung by Bhupinder Singh for Mausam. Even today this song makes Bhupinder Singh stand out uniquely in the galaxy of Indian playback singers. Such was the magic of the melody king Madan Mohan.

In 2009 Yash Raj Films also released the album *Tere Bagair* featuring a rare treasure of 15 unreleased songs composed by Madan Mohan in his peak years. They were recorded between 1964 and 1972 and were sung by Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Mohammed Rafi, Talat Mahmood and Kishore Kumar. Thus, *Veer-Zaara* and *Tere Bagair* demonstrate that Madan will always remain a wonder, a king of melodious compositions capturing various moods.

Madan Mohan had a handsome personality. He served in the Army for two years. He also tried his luck as an actor. Though his first film as a hero, *Parda*, remained incomplete, he did make an appearances in *Shabeed*, *Ansoo* and *Muntimji*. Being fond of singing, he recorded four ghazals in the late 1940s and also sang a film duet with Lata Mangeshkar. The song was composed by renowned music director Ghulam Haider, but was never released.