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Legends



**MADAN
MOHAN**

THE UNFORGETTABLE COMPOSER



W

oh bhuli dastaan lo phir yaad aa
gayee nazar ke saamne ghataa si chha
gayee, when was Madan Mohan ever a
Bhuli hui dastaan? Born for greatness,
destined for immortality and constantly driven
to attain perfection in his creative endeavours, Madan
Mohan Kohli was truly one of the most inspired and
inspiring music composers of the twentieth century.

His melody content was unparalleled. Listening today to
the shimmering collection of the composer's best songs as
they spread themselves out in a winged web of radiance,

we can only marvel at the compositions, each a musical monument and wonder,
"How did he do it?".

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t's hard to believe that Madan Mohan had no formal training in
music. Every note that fell mellifluently into his melodic orbit was
born from sheer instinct! Born on 25 June, 1924 in Baghdad Madan
Mohan was the son of the illustrious Rai Bahadur Chunilal, partner of the
Bombay Talkies and Filmistan studios in Mumbai. In his youth Madan
Mohan joined the army during world war II. In 1946
he was employed at the All India Radio in Lucknow
where he came into contact with such vocal geniuses as Bade Ghulam
Ali Khan and Begum Akhtar. The latter speaks in the anthology with
flamboyant fondness about how after hearing a particular tune she
rang up Madan Mohan and made him sing the whole composition
over the telephone line.



Begum Akhtar isn't alone in her high regard for this juggernaut composer. The 5 CDs are lavishly laced with heartfelt compliments paid by stalwarts of show world



like Manna Dey, tabla maestro Zakir Husain, Ghazal singer Jagit Singh, Santoor stalwart Shiv Kumar Sharma and of course the Nightingale Lata Mangeshkar. Her association with Madan Mohan yielded what's perhaps the most bountiful treasure chest of immortal melodies ever composed and sung for our films.

Once O.P.Nayyar had spontaneously exclaimed, "It's hard to decide whether God created the voice of Lata Mangeshkar for the compositions of Madan Mohan, or vice versa." That throwaway statement comes back to haunt us as we listen to the tumble of ballistic Lata - Madan Mohan melodies,



Each a Taj Mahal with inbuilt compartments of emotions in perpetual motion.

In the course of this timeless melody yessey meeting with Madan Mohan at year 1947 and the great Ghulam Haider had nightingale to Filmistan to sing named Madan Mohan for the never seen or heard this wannabe he was the son of the studio owner.



The song they sang together was recorded. After the recording the handsome young man told Lataji that he was soon going to become a music director. "You must sing in my first film as composer," Madan Mohan made the nightingale promise.

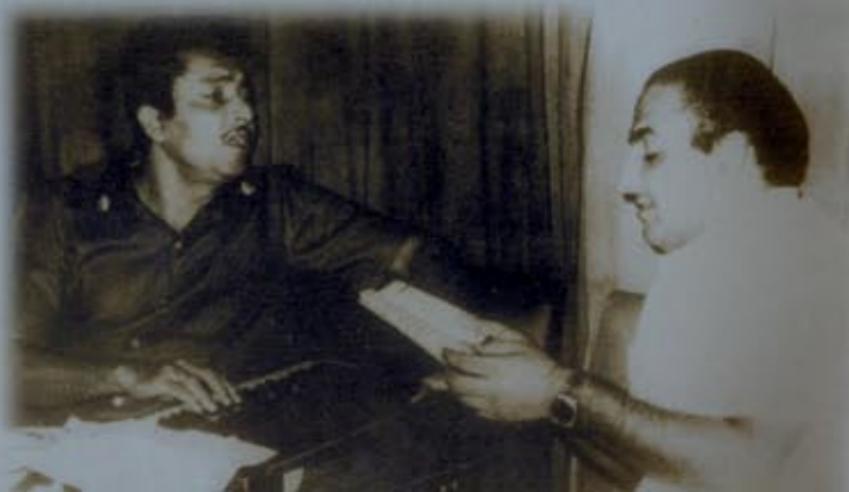
Lataji takes time off to recall her first Filmistan studios. It was the composer Master summoned the fledgling a duet with a new singer film Shaheed. Lataji had crooner. All she knew was



She was unable to sing film *Aankhen*. But Lataji gentle giant of a life. Together the siblings created more than history. They created scoops of immortality that mankind will hum as long as there's a place for beauty harmony creative integrity and existential truth in our galaxy.



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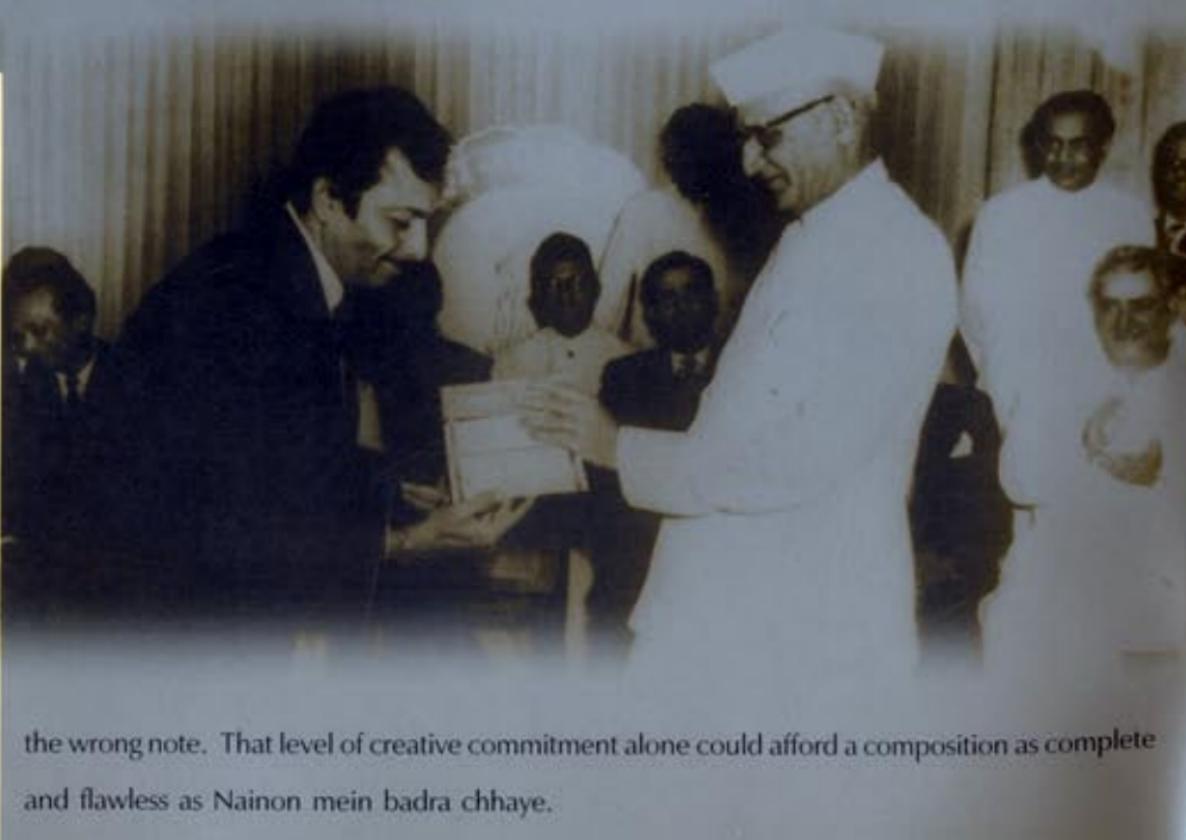


Can we ever tire of hearing Lataji sing Madan Mohan Saab's *Aapki nazron me samjha pyar ke qabil mujhe?* Colleague Naushad was one of the millions of melody enthusiasts who was spellbound after hearing this glorious Ghazal. "Give me this Ghazal and take all my compositions in exchange," Naushad Miyan exclaimed generously after hearing *Aapki nazron ne samjha*.

It's hard to believe that the inspiration for this peerless melody came to Madan Mohan in the lift which took him from the groundfloor to his residence in an apartment block. His sons recall how he would be humming tunes constantly. Creating Taj Mahalian melodies was almost second nature to Madan Mohan. So was cooking and physical fitness. Madan Mohan took as much care of his physique as he did with his songs. He could brook no imperfection let alone mediocrity in any aspect of his life.



There's this widely reported incident during the recording of the song Nainon mein badra chhaye where the perfectionist smashed the glass partition in a studio when a musician played

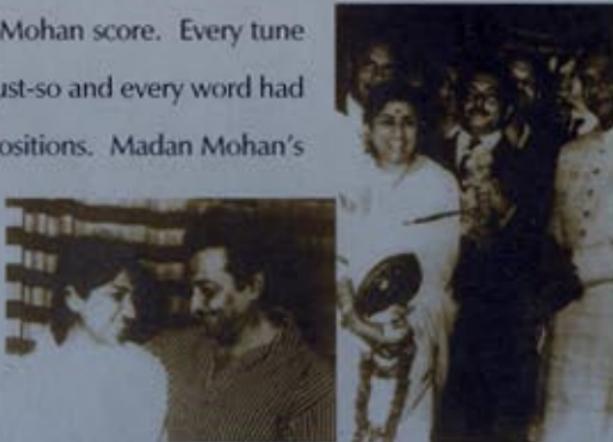


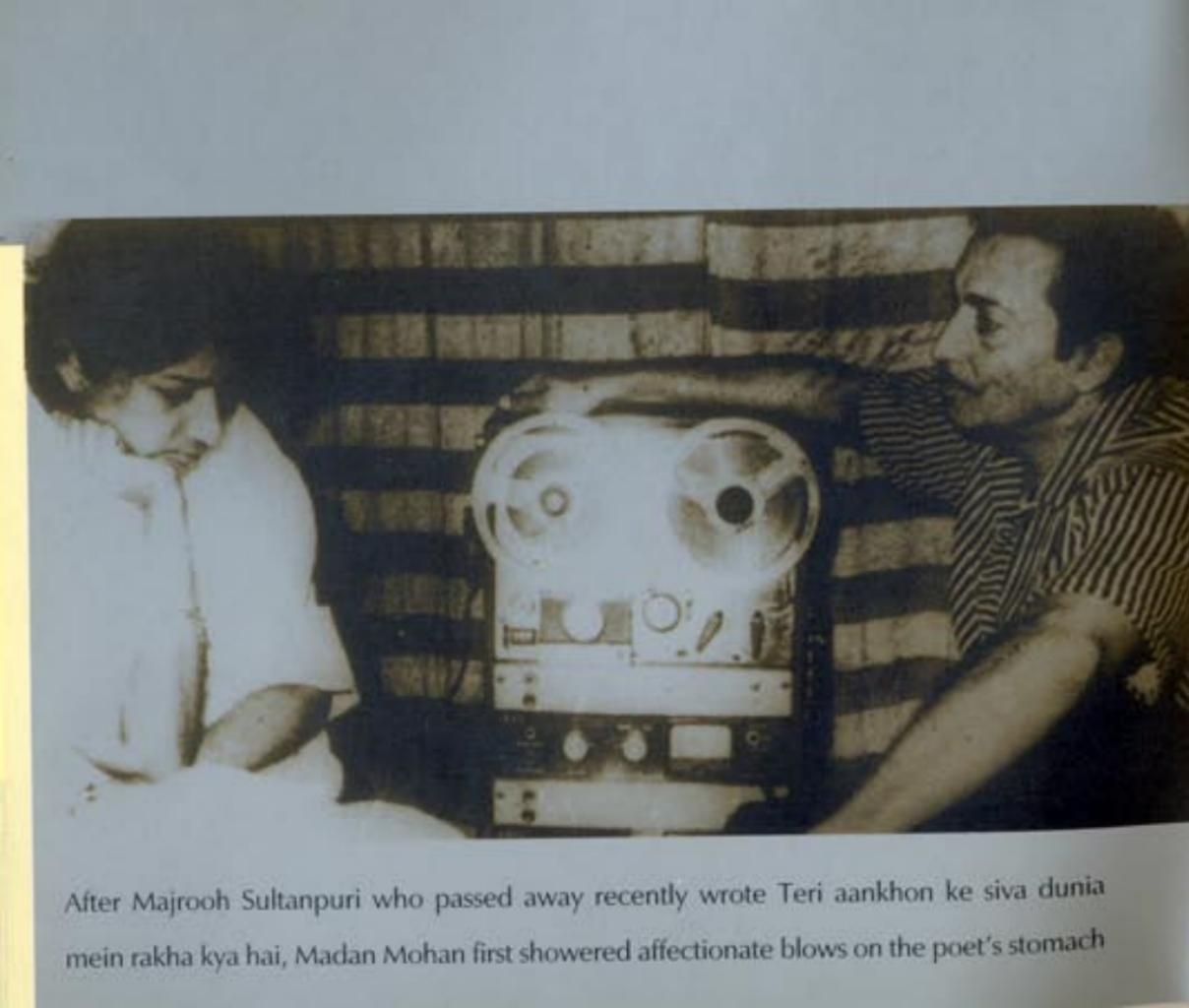
the wrong note. That level of creative commitment alone could afford a composition as complete and flawless as Nainon mein badra chhaye.

The composition in Raga Bhimpalasi spreads itself out like a veneer of talcum. Soft, sensitive, gentle, fragrant and health inducing. Despite his unfamiliarity with ragas Madan Mohan was always raga-perfect. Getting the sur right and the raga right was not a feat for this Ghazal Ka Badshah. The tune came first. The nuances and details simply followed.

Music was a passion a junoon for Madan Mohan. There were no side attractions or fringe tunes in a Madan Mohan score. Every tune had to be just right. Every note had to fall just-so and every word had to fit flawlessly into the design of the compositions. Madan Mohan's quest for lyrical perfection was almost as legendary as his search for compositional excellence. Legendary wordsmiths like Rajinder Krishan, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Kaifi Azmi and Majrooh Sultanpuri toiled

tirelessly to titillate the tunesmith's titanic efforts. After pleasing this super perfectionist the partners in the composing venture were always amply rewarded.





After Majrooh Sultanpuri who passed away recently wrote *Teri aankhon ke siva dunia mein rakha kya hai*, Madan Mohan first showered affectionate blows on the poet's stomach

and then dragged him home for a meal cooked by him. In the course of this handsome odyssey into the heart and soul of melody, Majrooh Sultanpuri says "No one could compose Ghazals like Madan Mohan". Millions of music lovers would agree with the view. When Lataji sang *Lag ja gale se*, the large-hearted creative colossus immediately gifted his Nightingale with Rs. 1000.

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ag ja gale se ranks today as one of the singer's own favourites. It's hard to select one out of the parade of memorabilia that Madan Mohan Saab orchestrated in *Woh Kaun Thi*. How do you choose *Lag jaa gale se* over *Jo humnein dastaan apni sunayee*?

The anthologist solves the dilemma in the best way possible by giving us the most popular and the best Madan Mohan compositions in the most representational format possible. The thrill of hearing Lataji sing *Lag ja gale se* is on this occasion compounded by the pleasure of hearing Madan Mohan himself hum some lines from *Woh Kaun Thi*.

The landmark release digs deep into the late composer's private collection to emerge with snatches, interludes, stanzas and interjections that music lovers have never had



the opportunity to relish and absorb before. The great composer's voice comes alive in the masterful anthology with great insight. Before Mohd Rafi steps into the stunning

soundtrack to sing *Tum jo mil gaye ho*, Madan Mohan Saab tells us that people think of this modern love ballad as being disparate from his customary style. But to this uncompromising genius music composition was about feelings not style.



And to think that Madan Mohan might have been absorbed in the army, or into the business of looking after his father's substantial interests in the movie making industry! Believe it or not the man who was born to make melody,

even played bit roles in films like Shaheed in 1948 and Munimji in 1955 ! But music and music alone was Madan Mohan Saab's true vocation. After assisting Sachin Dev Burman in Do Bhai and Munimji, the composer was launched as an independent music director.

Though Lataji didn't sing in his composing debut, she was there from his second score . The initial crop of films like Ada, Ashiana, Dhun and Railway Platform yielded hits like Sanwari surat



man bhai, Tum chand ke saath, Badi barbadiyan lekar and Chand madham hai.

Railway Platform with its parabolic structure and ensemble cast had tremendous scope for music. Madan Mohan grabbed the chance to give us what can be democratically termed as a national treasure. In Dekh Kabira Roya in 1957, Madan Mohan submerged his song-writing in the film's theme of art and humanity.

When in the first CD of this matchless melody pyramid Manna Dey pays handsome tributes to the man who brought manna (pun intended) down from heaven to earth, the singer's words aren't just empty noises.

Manna's Kaun aaya mere man ke dware in Dekh Kabira Roya amply disproves the myth that Madan Mohan was the master of the Ghazal only. Wrong! Put

this all rounder into any composing situation and he emerges trumps in every sense of the word. If Lataji sang many of Madan Mohan's most memorable Ghazals to eternal fame she also sang his straight forward love ballads like Tere bin saawan kaise beeta and Main to tum sang nain milake to everlasting fame.

The melodies simply flow into this fluent and wide-ranging album. And with the melodies come the feelings. Thoughts of love were shaped into sighs that never craved a destination, never knew a goal. A melody like Lag jaa gale se could never get wrinkled. The crease of time decreases with every listening of a Madan Mohan composition.





Did Sadhana, Nutan or Mala Sinha ever look as radiantly eloquent as they did while giving physical form to Madan Mohan's Naina barse, Aap ki nazron ne samjha and Sapnon mein agar mere? Every heroine's legendary status was enhanced when she lip-synced one of Madan Mohan's expressive compositions in Lata Mangeshkar's voice.

Mala Sinha personalises the remembrances of Madan and the music composer course and listen to the



soundtrack with fond Mohan, how her father would meet at the race composer's new creations.

A generosity of spirit underscored Madan Mohan's life and career. He never cared about accumulating the traditional luxuries of life. His songs were his luxuries and his life. Rehana Sultan who had the privilege

to lip sync some of Madan Mohan Saab's best Lata - compositions like Baiyan na dharo balma and Aapki baatein karen (both included in this collection) recalls how Madan Mohan refused to take money when she signed him to score music in her home production Dil Ki Raahein.

His life long fans included every music enthusiast from Begum Akhtar to Rehana Sultan. Even Hridayanath Mangeshkar blessed with an



awesome musical pedigree bowed to Madan Mohan's artistry. After he heard the songs of Jahan Ara, Hridayanathji made Madan Mohan Saab sign a copy of the long playing record from the film.

Listen to Lataji sing Woh chup rahan to mere dil ke daagh jalte hain and the composer's other favourite singer Talat Mahmood sing Phir wohi sham, wohi gham wohi tanhaai hai and you'd know why a composer as gifted as Hridayanath Mangeshkar fell for the beguiling paces, bountiful graces and sonorous spaces in the historical soundtrack of Jahan Ara.



It wasn't easy for Madan Mohan to be part of the sham and shallowness of showbiz. He had to be comfortable with the set-up and the production house even if it meant settling for the second-row assignments. His favourite producers included character actor Om Prakash. Subsequently Om Prakash confessed he made much more money out of the music of his films than the films themselves. The trend continues. Madan Mohan's scores continue to score bull's eye in every nostalgia circle.



His songs can best be described as "progressive nostalgia". While on one end Agar mujhse mohabbat hai and Meri aankhon se koi neend liye jaata hai are soaked in the sublime sensibilities of unforgettable pain and longing, on the other end they are also compositions that sound as though they were composed four days ago instead of four decades ago.

The songs have been chosen to stress the composer's panoramic range. Madan Mohan could move from pain in Bhuli hui yaadon mujhe itna na satao in Sanjog to parody in

zaroorat hai in Man-Mauji. Both the far flung moods-featured in CD2-are divided only in purpose, never in intention. Excellence was always Madan Mohan's goal.

To no one's surprise R.D.Burman, Gulzar and Asha Bhosle get together in this anthology to discuss the artistry of Madan Mohan in the fifth CD. Says Gulzar, "Just as Ghalib was the Ustad of poetry Madan Mohan was the Ustad of composition".



The comparison would have Mohan. The Ghazal was close hearts. By the time Dil ke raat din in Gulzar Saab's was gone. He died on 14th July 1975. Madan Mohan saab was only 51. In those 51 years he had achieved fifty lifetimes of excellence.

pleased both Ghalib and Madan to both the immortal artistes' dhoondta hai phir wohi phursat Mausam came out Madan Mohan

Upon his death the nation was swooning to the sound of Lata Mangeshkar - Bhupinder's Dil dhoondta hai. Which version of the same lyric does

one embrace as a favourite? In a rare outburst of intimacy, the anthologist has included snatches of Madan Mohan rehearsing various other tunes for *Dil dhoondta hai* as a preamble to the final version.

According to a conservative estimate Madan Mohan had five hundred ready tunes in his private music bank when death snatched him away so cruelly. In his lifetime he composed music for nearly 130 films. Today the world hums his creations with a possessive pride.

Every Madan Mohan composition seems to suggest a close link between mankind and divinity. With Lata Mangeshkar and other singing behemoths carrying Madan Mohan's messages across to the powers beyond the visible, we cannot help being entranced by the melodies of this selection of 86 songs.

From *Sanwari surat man bhai* in to Madan Mohan's last released beyond. Sensibly and inevitably the



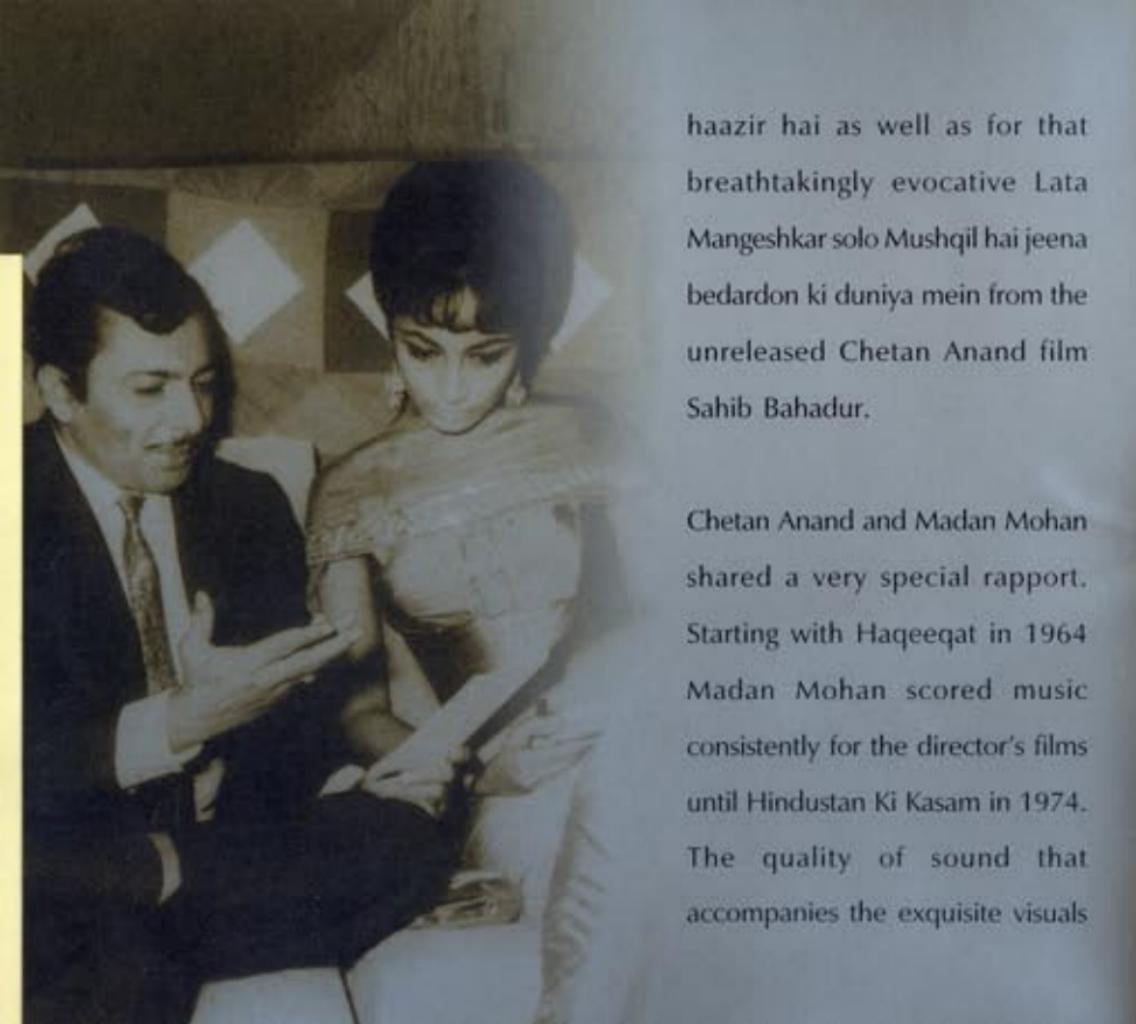
Ada the collection takes us film *Chaalbaaz* in 1980, and anthology proceeds to

feature three hitherto unreleased solos of Madan Mohan sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohd Rafi from shelved films.

That was the story of Madan Mohan's life. His quest for flawless melodies continued even beyond his death. *Husn haazir hai* from *Laila Majnu* released posthumously cracked open every chart in the country. It created a new market consciousness in the Hindi film industry.

Here we don't only get to hear the unabridged version of Lataji's *Husn haazir hai* we also get the singular honour of hearing the composer rehearse for *Husn*





haazir hai as well as for that breathtakingly evocative Lata Mangeshkar solo *Mushkil hai jeena bedardon ki duniya mein* from the unreleased Chetan Anand film *Sahib Bahadur*.

Chetan Anand and Madan Mohan shared a very special rapport. Starting with *Haqeeqat* in 1964 Madan Mohan scored music consistently for the director's films until *Hindustan Ki Kasam* in 1974. The quality of sound that accompanies the exquisite visuals

of Chetan Anand's films are an indication of the depth and dimensions of Madan Mohan's music.

Think of *Haqeeqat* and the nostalgia-saturated sounds of *Zara si aahat hoti hai to dil sochta hai* floods our senses. Think of *Heer Ranjha* and the film's ethereal tunes like *Yeh duniya yeh mehfil* and *Meri duniya mein tum aye* spread an ambrosial magic across our senses. Even the hugely talented Sachin Dev Burman was compelled to admit that no one but Madan Mohan could have achieved the sublime heights of eloquence in a "difficult" score like *Heer Ranjha*.



Nothing was difficult for Madan Mohan. No theme was too large, no project was too small to accommodate his prodigious talents. As the divine voice of Lataji comes on to sing a specially recorded version of the 1953 classic *Hamare baad ab mehfil mein* we feel a sense of longing affection and nostalgia for an era that nurtured a



talent as fathomless and fabulous as Madan Mohan.

As Lataji sings Hamare baad ab mehfil mein afsane bayaan honge/Baharen humko dhoondegi na jaane hum kahan honge.... we want to cling to this magical life-qualifying moment for as long as we can.

Come, re-live the most precious and cherishable moments of a talent that went far beyond the normal requirements of Hindi cinema to search for an exceptionally refined quality of melody.

It could be Lata Mangeshkar bringing to life the non-Ghazal beauty of Kadar jaane na in 1956. Or it could be Asha Bhosle investing a



sublimity into the Ghazal Jaane kya hal ho fourteen years later in 1970. Or it could be Bhupinder cutting nostalgic ice into chunks of

pain and longing in Dil dhoondta
hai five years after Asha Bhosle's
breathtaking solo.

No era held down the aura of
Madan Mohan's creations.
Matchless, timeless, peerless.
This collection is a joy forever.

-Subhash K Jha.

Presented by : Sanjeev Kohli

