

Reflections & Stray Thoughts

HQ Chowdhury



Reflections & Stray Thoughts

HQ Chowdhury



BLUE PENCIL

REFLECTIONS & STRAY THOUGHTS

HQ CHOWDHURY

Copyright © HQ Chowdhury 2021

HQ Chowdhury asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

First published by Blue Pencil 2021



BLUE PENCIL

A Venture of Wisitech InfoSolutions Pvt Ltd
76/2, 3rd Floor, East of Kailash, New Delhi - 110065

Ph: + 91.95828.49600

Email: sales@bluepencilpublishers.com

www.bluepencilpublishers.com

ISBN: 978-81-952978-3-2

Cover photograph courtesy: TJ Natarajan

Cover Design: Blue Pencil Studio

This book has been published with all efforts taken to make the material error-free after the consent of the author. However, the author and the publisher assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies herein and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

While every effort has been made to avoid any mistake or omission, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that neither the author nor the publishers or printers would be liable in any manner to any person by reason of any mistake or omission in this publication or for any action taken or omitted to be taken or advice rendered or accepted on the basis of this work.

The views and opinions expressed in this work are the author's own and the information is as reported by him, and the publisher is in no way liable for the same. Pictures used in the book have been provided by the author.

Printed at: Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd, Greater Noida

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author.



Author's Note

Most baby boomers of the sub-continent loved music, and cherished movies and sports too. Today, there should be an opportunity for revisiting the “Old Golds”. The powerful line by Alfred Tennyson, “The old order changeth yielding place to new”, is for them a misnomer.

Reflections and Stray Thoughts is an anthology of articles on music, movies and sports of the 1930-1980 time frame with sneak peeks at events around the world. Growing restless with city life, I developed a fascination for recalling good old days of entertainment to present a treasure trove of what it was like in the past for the new generation and also salute those who brought joy to a baby boomer like me.

Certainly “light reading”, the book is not for the “thinking readers” but an attempt to ease away a boring afternoon or the uneasiness of traveling alone.



In fond memories of

“Gaaner Didi” Hemnolini Roy, Ustad Yusuf Khan Qureishi and Ustad Quader Zameri. Days of the 50s, 60s, 70s and mid-80s of the last century.

Index

1. Back to Square One	7
2. Zaheer Abbas	13
3. The Ultimate Hindi Film Music Composers	17
4. Hachiko	21
5. Jatugriha	24
6. Of Hindi Film Songs and Classical Music	27
7. Remembering Rituparno Ghosh	32
8. The Sachin Dev Burman - Manna Dey Saga	36
9. A Disturbing Week!	40
10. Room with a View	44
11. Chanda: Dhaka's First Released Urdu Film	47
12. Lasting Music Pieces in Films	52
13. Of Cricket and Films of the Subcontinent	56
14. Mehdi Hassan: Touching the Finer Chords of Emotion in Music	61
15. Artists and Audience	65
16. Dev Anand	68
17. Sachin Dev Burman aka Sachin Karta	72
18. Untold Stories	77
19. Dhaka's Shabnam and Robin Ghosh in Pakistan	80
20. Suchitra	84
21. The Magnificent Three from Bengal	88
22. Same Colour, Different Shades	92
23. Pot Pourri	96
24. At My Wits' End	100
25. Subcontinent's First Film Noir	103
26. Robin Ghosh, the Last Legend	107
27. Austerity	111

28. The Singing Bengalis in Bombay	114
29. Tasveer	118
30. COVID-19 and Lockdown	121
31. Classical Music in Dhaka	126
32. A Morning Stranger	131
33. Shabnam	134
34. Notes from a Werewolf	139
35. Harmonium	143
36. Random Thoughts in a Hot Tin Restaurant	147
37. In the Footprints of Tagore	150
38. Pride and Prejudice of Hindi Film Composers	154
39. Rabindranath Tagore and Sachin Dev Burman	158
40. The Only GURU!	161
Acknowledgements	166

Back to Square One

Back to square one. After more than fifty years since my exit from St. Gregory's High School, life has come back to me on a platter! I am now again into the 60s, 70s and early 80s of the last century and enjoying it with tremendous satisfaction.

My 'love life' begins from 6:30 am. That is when I leisurely go to the park for a stroll. An hour or so after, I call my older brother, Habeeb Seth, for that customized breakfast to be served. Such a dear person, he has been doing that for over 20 years now. Is there another soul of his kind? Not that I have seen! The morning and afternoon sessions are then spent pretty straight cut, in household chores, checking mails, keeping abreast with the world around me and shopping, if any.

A siesta post-lunch with my cell phone switched off, I am up bubbling with energy for that berth in the privacy of our living room. A TV in front, a smartphone and a pile of books/magazines on the right. Legs stretched to a small stool for the right balance and comfort, I have my drink – hot, cold, soft, hard, as I like it with an occasional yell at my 'Man Friday' for refills and purchases of those steaming roadside snacks like *singaras*, *samosas* and *puris* to complement my drink. Every other day some friends drop by and what a feast of fun on those days!

But *Nicht Rauchen*...No Smoking now! With some medical issues, I had to keep it aside along with food containing caffeine and gluten. But I still yearn for it especially after a sumptuous meal with a cup of hot, sugared *malai* tea.

I loved whiling away my time from time immemorial but that did not last long. My father left too early and I could ill afford that luxury

after that. Now 'retired' and in the senior citizen's age bracket, I am happily back to my old life with some added benefits. The power of retirement has been unleashed – you don't owe any explanation to anybody with respect to time, space and money. The winds of change in me over the passage of time are visible. A receding hairline, sunken cheeks, a fallen gait, changing biochemistry (interesting but not inspiring!), a level of composure or 'cooling down' but not by choice – age mellows, after all!

I loved playing, specially cricket and football, but had to give them up for being a 'science student' which demanded time-consuming practical classes. As a result, watching sports became an intrinsic part of my life, along with music and movies. A drive on the off-side, a flick past fine leg or a pull-over mid-wicket by the great masters of today's cricket – Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Joe Root, Steve Smith, Babar Azam and a few more. What more can one expect since the days of Neil Harvey, that plodder Hanif Mohammad, Tom Graveney, Garfield Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Zaheer Abbas, Sunil Gavaskar, Ian and Greg Chappel, Vivian Richards, David Gower, Denis Lillie, Jeff Thomson, Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding, Colin Croft, Andy Roberts and some more. And in football, Lionel Messi, Neymar, Cristiano Ronaldo and others plus the canned stuff on YouTube of good old Pele, Bobby Charlton, Jimmy Greaves, Franz Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller, Ian Cruyff, Eusebio, Diego Maradona, Michael Platini, et al! Thanks to technology, it is now on a high resolution big screen that I see them in action, comfortably in a restaurant or at home without having to face the scorching sun or the use of horrifying public toilets in the stadium.

The 'Home Minister' returns and steps into the living room to give me a disappointed look, not because of my lackadaisical approach to life but because I am in front of the 'better' TV. It is not the resolution but the clarity of sound that draws the line between the two TVs. My 'TV booking' means she has to go to the other room for Anjali, Sabita, Rohit, Deepak or Sreemoyee's melodrama. I stay cool with no intention to give up my seat for her pleasure and my pain.

My mood swings every other day. Sometimes the TV is for cricket or football and on other days badminton, table tennis, lawn tennis

or athletics. Around 7.30 pm or so, there is a call for dinner. At this point, I am a bit uncomfortable, especially when fried fish along with chicken curry, dal and vegetables are served. Somehow, fried stuff gives me the wrong vibes. I have always felt that in order to get rid of them it is the near-rotten elements that are fried and served - my gut agrees! I saw that happen in a London Bengali restaurant many years ago. So, I ignore the fish. It is for the same reason I always skip eggs, 'omelette', at unfamiliar places; on such occasions given a choice, I always prefer eggs 'sunny side up' to other egg preparations. These are



Madhubala
(SMM Ausaja Archives)

some of the idiosyncrasies I still retain. After dinner, my 'break' for most days is for a film, music or some reading.

Due to professional reasons for about 30 years, I almost lost touch with movies and books. Now I am making up. My recent favourites have been *Pretty Woman*, *Scent of a Woman*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Lincoln*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Pianist*, *Enemy at the Gate* and the relatively new one, *Trial of the Chicago 7*. But mind you, my

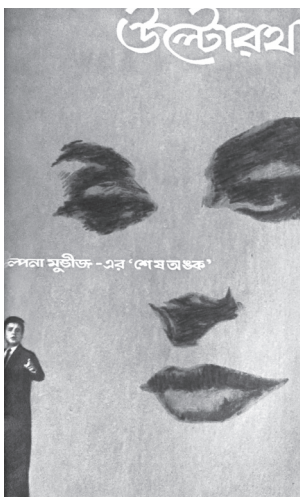
flames still continue to be Madhubala, Meena Kumari, Suchitra Sen, Waheeda Rahman, Sophia Loren, Audrey Hepburn, Ingrid Bergman, and from the 70s Hanna Schygulla who entered my life rather late. I am ready to fall in love with any one of them even today!

There was a time when I was happily hooked to the songs by Harry Belafonte, Jose Feliciano, Paul Anka, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Elvis ('the pelvis'), Cliff Richard, Engelbert Humperdinck, and Nat King Cole. I also was fascinated by the Beatles, Neil Diamond, Abba, Boney M, Bob Marley and that *guitarwala* Santana. As time went by, classical, modern and film songs of the subcontinent took over and so stepped into my life Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Saigal, Mukesh, Talat, Rafi, Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, Hemant

Kumar, Geeta, Lata and Asha.

Composers always appealed to me and if they happened to be singers too then I would be transported to a different world. I am a big fan of Sachin Dev Burman, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Nisar Hussain Khan and Kishori Amonkar. And I often remember Ustad Yusuf Khan Qureishi who spent so many of his evenings at our place composing songs. Once in a while, I close my eyes to remember the great maestro. He was a rare gem. It gives me a lot of pain today that perhaps we could have done a bit more for him and Ustad Quader Zameri. Both were so hard up, professionally and financially.

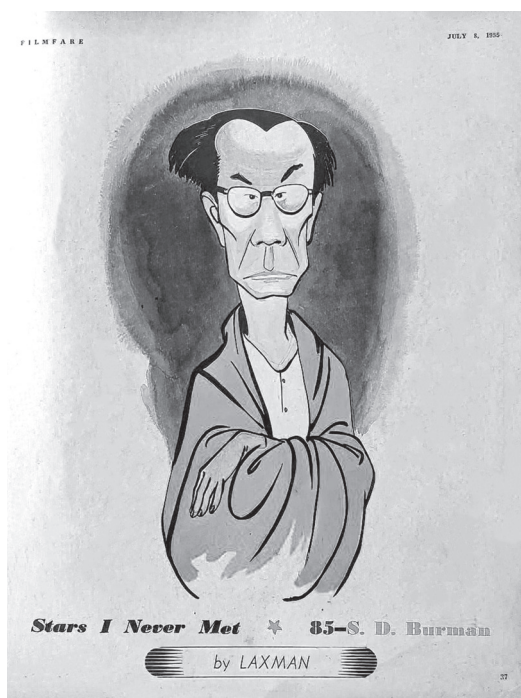
My book reading started with Ian Stephen's *Horned Moon*, who was editor of *The Statesman* (Calcutta), followed by Margaret Mitchell's, *Gone With the Wind*. Even today I love that guy, Rhett Butler and of course adore Scarlett O'Hara but please do not ask me why. Just the other day, I found these two books stashed on one of the old shelves. I finished reading them again within 3 days. It was such a pleasant surprise as the books belonged to my father and grandfather respectively. *The Rommel Papers* by General Rommel's son is another great book I got back to and also, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Shirer. These books still cater to my needs even today.



Ultrath cover
(Sounak Gupta)

My craving for Bangla books began not with Tagore or Sarat Chandra but Shankar's *Chowringhee*. I still love it. I slave over Tagore's Bengali short stories as I do over the English translations of Maupassant's works. The others, Syed Mujtaba Ali, Banaphul, Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, Achinto Kumar Sen Gupta, Bimal Mitra, Samaresh Basu, etc., are still big pullers. Quite frankly, contemporary works of literature do not appeal to me but books on politics do, and I have a good collection

of them to last my lifetime. By the way, I am looking for that Bengali book series, *Doshshu Mohon* – remember Inspector Baker? Does



RK Laxman's cartoon of SD Burman, 1955
(Filmfare/SMM Ausaja Archives)

anyone have a copy? Or for that matter, old copies of *Ultoroth*, *Jalsa* and *Gharoa* that featured my 'heart throbs'?

Cartoons/humour always attracted me. It began with cartoonist RK Laxman's subtle satire with lines and observations of the common man. He died around 2015 after prolonged illness. When I was young, I did not have the faintest idea that RK Narayan of *The Guide* and *Malgudi Days* was his brother. Mario Miranda's work in the

Illustrated Weekly of India was also such a treat. He is gone too, I am told. For anyone who cared to know Mario's real name, it is 'Mario Joao Carlos do Rosario de Brito Miranda ComIH'.

Sudhir Dhar of *The Statesman* was also so much fun. His front page cartoons titled, *Out of My Mind*, were without captions. I am yet to find their equals even today. Here in Dhaka, I remember MA Aziz who sketched for the *Morning News*. I have no idea of his whereabouts today. By the way, Alfred Neuman of MAD was a 'character'! So was Big Moose of the Archie series! Wonder if they are still in print! Then there was Art Buchwald, the humorist with his column. I came to know him through *The Weekly of Pakistan* and then the political cartoonist and journalist (Ranan) Lurie of *Life* and *Newsweek* and of course *Punch*, the magazine of humour and satire. Art Buchwald died some 10-15 years ago. Lurie disappeared from my life but someone told me he is still functioning from New York. Do we recall today that *Punch* first used the term 'Cartoon' for

comic drawings in the middle of the 19th century? *Punch* went out of circulation in 1992 and was reincarnated in 1996 to live another 6 years until it finally 'rested' in peace.

I was very fond of film magazines, especially *Filmfare*, *Picture Post* from India, *Eastern Film* from Karachi, Pakistan and *Silver Screen*, *Motion Picture* and *Screenland* from Hollywood. I have a few of these issues even today and when I go through them after 40-50 years, I find a different kind of pleasure, a new kind

of romance, nostalgia and a stupid me! A result of a change in perspective! During my professional life, I was exposed to culinary delights around the world, thanks to my extensive travels but little did I know my classmate, Shawkat Osman had authored 10 books on the art of culinary with each of them being a gem! Shawkat's TV shows on this subject, for years with his charming wife Naheed, was a blockbuster in Bangladesh and Eastern India. What a spin-off from his career as a businessman. Try his books, *Kunti Korai* or Recipes from the *Rasoi* and you will know what I am talking about.

Zaaaaaaaap went the 70s, 80s, 90s and the two decades of the new millennium. It was just like the other day! But it's no big deal! After so many years, I am once again back to my 'school' and life. Everything of the past and more but now with no bar, no hide-and-seek!

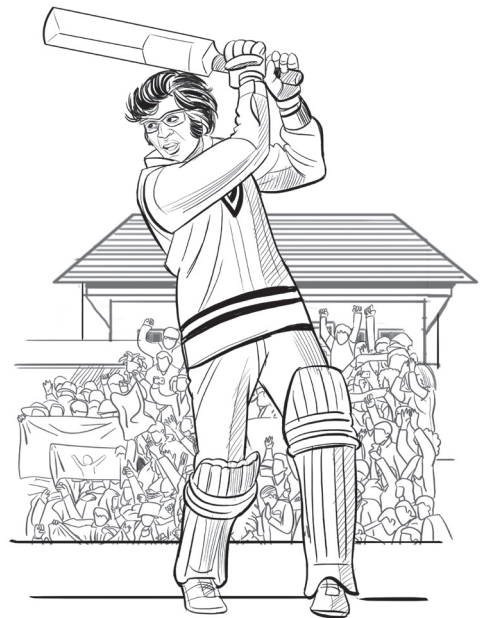


Filmfare cover featuring Suchitra Sen
(SMM Ausaja Archives)

Zaheer Abbas

He was amongst Gary Sobers' '10 Best Batsmen'. To John Woodcock, his cover drives were "one of the finest sights of the English summer". Ted Dexter picked him as the only Pakistani who he thought was better than him and Sunil Gavaskar his idol, for the grace he brought to the art of batting.

Dubbed as the Asian Bradman, Zaheer Abbas was finally inducted in the ICC Hall of Fame in August 2020. What ailed the ICC/FICA in 2009 to ignore him in its first batch of 55 cricketers for the Hall of Fame and then all these years baffled me. His Test batting average of 44.79 with 12 centuries might not be spectacular but was ahead of quite a few of the original 55. And his ODI average was world-class by any standard, along with the strike rate. Some arguments emerged. In Test cricket, he was hardly a man of crisis or a match winner; he was inconsistent and vulnerable against genuine pace. But these



Zaheer Abbas

issues could, of course, be contested. Besides, which batsman did not have ups and downs and was free from flaws?

Cricket is not only runs, centuries, wickets and statistics. It is also a game of art and craft, style and elegance. And this is where Zaheer Abbas stood out. Cricket writers like John Arlott, EW Swanton, John Woodcock, Henry Bloefield, Christopher Martin Jenkins were often in wonderment at his art and implied that he had no peer when in full cry. Zaheer flourished at the international level during Pakistan's tour of England in 1971. He was then around 24. At Worcester, he took off with a breezy 100 and by May he scored 731 runs. Then in the first Test at Edgbaston, he played a phenomenal innings of 274 to complete 1,000 runs for the season. Opponents, press and public yet cast doubts about his future because of the high back lift. This was despite the newcomer's mastery over an English attack which included Peter Lever, Ray Illingworth and Derek Underwood that had tormented the Australians the year before. They pointed out the absence of John Snow and the placid Edgbaston pitch. "Would the sickly-looking Zaheer be a success on faster tracks or when the ball seamed and swung both ways?" But Ted Dexter deduced otherwise. "You must be some batsman to score a century every five knocks." Zaheer by then already had nine centuries in only 45 first-class innings.

More than 50% of Zaheer's centuries and runs in first class cricket were scored overseas and through his exclusive association with Gloucestershire. He mocked his critics for 13 years scoring over 16,000 runs with 49 hundreds at an average of 49.79. At the end of his career, his total runs in first class cricket were 34,843 with 108 centuries at an average of 51.54. Test cricket however, was not all smooth for him. One of the reasons being not getting enough of it to play when he was at his peak. Pakistan played a lot less than other countries. Thanks to the country's cricket management which even today is mystifying and intriguing.

His second century (again a double) was in 1974 at the Oval, three years after the first and then the third almost another three years later in Adelaide, Australia. In between were some poor scores! Such inconsistencies masked his real talent and raised issues too. As

a natural stroke maker, his innings was never a benign occupation of the crease to score with utmost care as if it was the bowler who was in control of the game. But Zaheer was someone out of the ordinary. He was bent upon dominating the bowlers from the very beginning despite the bowler's skill or the condition of the pitch. That being the case, a short one outside the off or leg stump would be offered no stroke by good players but to Zaheer it must be punished. That was true for a straight one too and good length from which he scored with outstanding ease. This school of batting had a downside too. When his off-drives and on-side flicks did not connect well, they ended up being edged to the waiting hands. The spectators obviously never expected these early exits and were disappointed, like the author who had gone all the way to England in 1982 to watch him bat. But when the going was good they were compensated too with a stroke play of charm and grace that had a stamp not seen in many in the history of the game. So, let us face the simple fact; at the end of the day, he scored a century on every six and a half visits to the crease, which was excellent among those who made 100 hundreds, with the exception of Sir Donald Bradman. To explain his extremes of scores is therefore being unfair to him and his art.

Zaheer derived power from his high back lift, played late with sweet timing and the wristy deflection of the bat at the moment of impact gave his batting a seductive appeal. It was soon to become a subject of discussion about the style and flair of a batsman. His runs came at a quick tempo without ever applying devastating power. Therefore, to some, his batting was poetry in motion while to others, his bat was an instrument of music as if it were a violin.

My own abiding memory of Zaheer's batting goes back to 1968 when he scored in Karachi a scintillating knock of 197 against the then East Pakistan. In January 1971, he was in Dhaka again and scored back-to-back centuries (118 and 196). I immediately became his fan for his array of strokes all around the wicket. The English county cricket and Sheffield Shield cricket in Australia had always attracted me. Kanhai, Sobers, Clive Lloyd, John Edrich, Geoffrey Boycott, Derek Underwood, the Chappell brothers, Doug Walters and a few more used to haunt me. Without fail every night, I would

be tuning in to BBC for the 'Sports Round Up' for the cricket update. In the summer of 1973, Zaheer's unbeaten 163 against Surrey at the Oval reminded me of his Dhaka innings. A few days later there was another century. From then onwards, I kept a tab on him.

County cricket conditions were tough. Hours and hours of travel and playing for months at a stretch was no joke. Unpredictable weather for those swings, seams, uneven bounce and turns. Wickets were not covered like today, helmets were unknown and there were not many restrictions in limited overs matches. This was professional cricket. You fail, you go! Many superstars of Test cricket failed under such conditions. The English county cricket became the ultimate test for the world's finest players and Zaheer had to go through the process. During the 70s, it was Zaheer, Vivian Richards and Geoffery Boycott who were hitting the cricket headlines.

Zaheer was the first batsman to score hundreds in three successive ODI innings and five successive hundreds in international innings. Zaheer Abbas's ODI runs at an average of 47.62 were the fifth-highest for any batsman at the time of retirement and he attained a rating high of 931, putting him second on the all-time rankings. Only 12 players have ever hit a high of 900 in the charts. Till today he is the only Asian batsman to score 100 first-class centuries and the only one to score a century in each innings of a first class match eight times. Just as Brian Lara's unbeaten 501 runs in first class cricket, his double-hundred and a hundred in a first class match four times without being dismissed would be hard to match. His late inclusion in The Hall of Fame is cricket's victory. Sunil Gavaskar amusingly said of his friend, "Perhaps his biggest sin was to give me my only Test wicket at the cost of his second century in a Test match."

Thank you, ICC! Better late than never!

The Ultimate Hindi Film Music Composers

It was more than fifty years ago when I first heard Lata's wistful, *Rula ke gaya sapna mera* composed by SD Burman for *Jewel Thief*. Matinée idol Dev Anand was canoeing to locate the voice on that moonlit night. Today, the number still haunts millions, just as the memory of SD Burman who passed away on October 31, 1975, more than 45 years ago.

"What do you think of SD Burman?" I once asked Anilda, (Anil Biswas) that giant of a composer, then the senior-most music director of Hindi film music. "Nothing much to write about," said the composer of *Dil jalta hai to jalne de*, *Seene mein sulagte hain armaan*. I was taken aback; and before I could get over my shock, Anilda continued, "You see most of his numbers were composed by Jaidev who for long was his assistant; but in *Guide* he was good."

"What about *Abhimaan*?" I said. "It was the story that carried the film through not the music," he said, disregarding such perennial airs like *Nadiya kinare*, *Piya bina piya bina*, *Teri bindiya re*, *Tere mere milan ki ye raina*, *Meet na mila re man ka*, *Ab to hai tumse*, *Loote koi man ka nagar* when there was no Jaidev or RD Burman to assist SD Burman.

I was indeed at my wit's end. In the mid-60s at a discussion on film music in Bombay, Anil Biswas went on to say that C Ramchandra (*Yeh zindagi usiki hai*, *Jaag*



HQ Chowdhury with Anil Biswas
at his New Delhi residence

dard-e-ishq jaag), who was once his assistant, was the greatest Hindi film composer of all time. “He is even better than SD Burman,” thus giving SD Burman an enviable status in Hindi film music!

I do not know if composers (or for that matter, singers as well) keep changing their views. Is it because this political activist (originally from Barisal, Bangladesh) was edged out by the ‘Prince of Tripura’ (originally from Comilla) in the domain of Hindi film music of which he once had a firm grip? Anil Biswas left the Bombay film industry when SD Burman was scaling new heights and continued to rule the popularity charts till his last film. Some were of the opinion that C Ramchandra also did not think much of SD Burman as a composer of merit. C Ramchandra, for some years was Anil Biswas’ assistant; so the master and the pupil’s almost identical views could perhaps be attributed to SD Burman’s minimal use of the orchestra as his emphasis was more on the melody of the song.

“Just give me a harmonium, a tabla and a Lota (Lata) and I shall give you unforgettable melodies,” SD Burman is once reported to have said. In his early years as a film composer, he dreaded the orchestra. But when we analyze his career, we find he developed it enough for his music to suit the highly competitive market. It is therefore not a surprise



Dada Burman with Lata Mangeshkar on stage

that Lata chose him to orchestrate her songs on her silver jubilee night, leaving Anil Biswas (who by then had already quit the film industry), Naushad (*Mohe bhool gaye saanwariya*), Salil Chowdhury (*Ghadi ghadi mora dil*

dhadke) behind, not to mention C Ramchandra who orchestrated SD Burman’s songs in his maiden Hindi film, *Shikari* and who, like Madan Mohan, scored only keeping Lata in mind.

What made SD Burman’s music different from those of others? After making the ‘mukhda’ of a song and detailing his requirement

to his assistants Jaidev, RD Burman and N Datta, SD Burman would say, “*Tum sab antara banao; tab tak main paan khake aata hoon*” (all of you prepare the antara; in the meanwhile, let me have my *paan*). Jaidev had said, “Being in love with classical music, I was always inclined to compose in that vein which would make the song a bit complicated. But Burman Dada would reject it, saying, ‘*Yeh sab kyun karta hai?*’ (why do you do this?). I want my songs to be composed in a manner so that my *bhanji* can also sing’”. As a matter of fact, this clue to his phenomenal rise was provided by none other than his own tea boy.

In the early days when SD Burman was struggling in Bombay, he once found his tea boy playing Naushad’s tunes in his music room. Instead of being jealous, he asked him what made him sing Naushad’s songs. The boy shivered, obviously in fear of being fired! But the maestro got what he wanted. Film songs must have easy access to a listener so that one could hum them. SD Burman from then onwards followed this theory to become what he became.

Anil Biswas’ remark on SD Burman could only ignite a hot debate as to who was the ‘ultimate’ in Hindi film music at that period of time. But for Anilda, who gave film music composition an exemplary creative path, there is more than one reason for him to make such a comment on SD Burman. He was one of the pioneers of music from the Bombay group along with Jhande Khan, Saraswati Devi, Rafiq Ghaznavi & Co and the first to integrate the orchestra in a song. His music had orchestral finesse and melody woven into one fabric. Therefore, having Salil Chowdhury and RD Burman as his favourites was no surprise, as both loved orchestration in a song. Again, Anil Biswas was also a connoisseur of ghazals (*Aye dil mujhe aisi jagah le chal jahan koi na ho*) so it is therefore not unusual for him to rank Sajjad Hussain (*Yeh hawa yeh raat yeh chandni*, a number that stands out also for its orchestral beauty) as the final in film music. On the other hand, this foul-mouthed composer from Lahore, Hussain, felt SD Burman was the only complete composer, the rest being only tunesmiths, a view also shared by that master composer from Lahore, Khurshid Anwar (*Dil ka diya jala, Sagar roye*) because of the old monk’s firm grip on both, the folk and classical.

Even that trendsetter and rhythm master, OP Nayyar (*Chal akela chal akela*) who shook the musical world in the 50s added that SD Burman was a *mukammal* composer while Shankar (of the Shankar-Jaikishan duo) would be



HQ Chowdhury with Salil Chowdhury

elated immensely when SD Burman complimented his compositions. Yet again, the supremely talented Salil Chowdhury told me he never thought much of OP Nayyar as a composer and thought little of Naushad Ali, as well. “A listener always had a tendency to think first about the raaga employed before listening to the song

in full,” Salil Chowdhury said about Naushad. On the other hand, Salil Chowdhury felt refreshed with the Bengali SD Burman and the Marathi C Ramchandra’s compositions. But this great Marathi composer (C Ramchandra) always thought that he never got a fair deal as Naushad, who ruled the roost in those days, had a better public relation! And guess what! Ravi Shankar once made a statement that Salil Chowdhury would make music unnecessarily complicated despite being a talented composer pointing fingers at *O Sajna, barkha bahar aayi*, the *Parakh* song (and its Bangla version *Na jeona rojoni ekhono baaki*). When confronted, he withdrew his statement and admitted to Satyajit Ray that he was not a composer of film songs in the calibre of SD Burman, Madan Mohan and Salil Chowdhury.

“RC Boral, Khemchand Prakash, Ghulam Haider, Shyam Sunder, Anil Biswas, SD Burman, mere liye sada prerna ke srota rahe hain. Film sangeet ke kshetra mein inka kaarvaan kabhi bhulaya nahin ja sakta” (RC Boral, Khemchand Prakash, Ghulam Haider, Shyam Sunder, Anil Biswas, SD Burman will always be a source of inspiration for me. In film music their work can never be forgotten) said Naushad Ali, the first ‘superstar’ of film music.

But, then, this discussion can be endless.

Hachiko

This write-up is all about a dog and his loyalty. I had no idea of him until a decade back my good friend, Swapan Ustad recommended me to watch the American film, Hachi. I could not source it in Dhaka, but I did finally have the opportunity to see it in Atlanta, USA, years later. It was a touching film of a dog named Hachiko of Akita breed and his master, Prof Hidesaburo Ueno, an agriculture scientist of Tokyo University.

Every morning Hachiko would be at the Tokyo Shibuya station to see off his master and greet him in the evening from the same place. This went on for two years, when the Professor failed to show up one evening. While lecturing in class, he apparently fell down due to a cerebral stroke and passed away. That was in 1925. But Hachiko would not believe that. He waited at the station until his death from cancer and filaria in 1935, surviving all those years on food given by passers-by.

There are many stories of Hachiko's ten years of 'waiting' which also included Prof Ueno's partner, Yaeko Sakano, who wanted to adopt him but Hachiko refused to be with her though he loved her a lot. There were also many corporations with various



With Hachi's statue in Shibuya, Tokyo where Hachi loitered the last 12 years of his life

END OF SAMPLE

Loved this book?



Buy it Now!
on

