

# NOTES



*A VIBE. IN THE MUSICAL JOURNEY*

EDITION 1 | DECEMBER 2018





# FROM THE MUSICAL CORNER OF SUBHAJIT

Notes represent music as well as textual content related to a subject. When we are on a musical journey that we started on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, we thought of having an online magazine where a lot of untold stories and facts and thoughts can be shared on the topic of music.

From the comparative studies of Music to the various genres of music, any topic on music is highly appreciated.

This issue is however a small one with just a few articles about music and is a special edition as this is the 1<sup>st</sup> edition which is getting launched at our Grand Global Meetup to be held on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2018.

Tunes has come a quite long way although it is still young(not even 1 year old) but the love and bonding between all our members make it a unique global musical platform that is really growing and we want all of you to own Tunes and share with your friends and family so that I get a chance always to give you something unique and delightful.

Like I said many times, Tunes is not only for singers but musicians and avid listeners as well so while adding your friends to this group, don't ever feel that only singers are allowed in this group.

It gives me immense pleasure to launch our very first online magazine, NOTES, for Tunes a Musical journey.

If anyone of you have any suggestions or questions, please feel free to reach out to me at [tunesamusicaljourney@gmail.com](mailto:tunesamusicaljourney@gmail.com)

I wish you all the very best. See you all in the next edition again

# INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC VS WESTERN MUSIC

BY SAYANTI ACHARYA

Music has no language; no boundaries. Its just music. You could jus listen to it and feel it. When you are on stage you connect to it, it does not matter whether its Korean English Hindi or there is no language at all. Just a sound filling your mind and soul. There are different kind of music in different parts of the world but the basic is same. All consist the 7 notes. Some times it gets higher or lower but cant go beyond The 7notes. There are 3 most important parts in music. first is characters which is known as lyrics. second is body which is the technical aspects of the song such as rhythm ragas. Last is soul and soul is the singer of the song.

And these 3 important parts keep on changing with the culture people mood genres.

So lets start with Indian classical music or dhrupad.

The golden age of dhrupad commenced when emperor Akbar invited the legendary Miya Tansen to the imperial court. Dhrupad is a Sanskrit name, derived from the words dhruva (immovable, permanent) and pad (verse), a combination that means "pillar". The roots of Dhrupad are ancient. A Dhrupad has at least four stanzas, called Sthayi (or Asthayi), Antara, Sancari and Abhoga. The Sthayi part is a melody that uses the middle octave's first tetra chord and the lower octave notes . The Antara part uses the middle octave's second tetra chord and the higher octave notes. The Samcari part is the development phase, which holistically builds using parts of Sthayi and Antara already played, and it uses melodic material built with all the three octave notes. The Abhoga is the concluding section, that brings the listener back to the familiar starting point of Sthayi, albeit with rhythmic variations, with diminished notes like a gentle goodbye, that are ideally mathematical fractions such as dagun (half), tigun (third) or caugun (fourth). A musical exposition in dhrupad start with the key note of the scale afterwhich a musical theme gradually and slowly develop through improvisation. The musical basis of dhrupad is a large collection of microtonal scales. Any frequency of vibration can be a microtone, the number of potential microtones is infinite. **Dhrupad includes different types of ragas. Raga or raag is mood, a cosmic feelings atmosphere, that enraptures the mind, filling with aesthetic delight.**

*When we are in tune with God, the life force or the laws of nature, we always do the right action and do not make mistakes. We don't need to think which action to do or how to do it; it flows naturally and with no effort. It is the same with raga. When we have the right tuning of the raga, it flows through us naturally. We don't need to think if the phrases are right or anything. That is also why Dhrupad is a spiritual learning. It teaches us the right tuning and develops the experience of God consciousness in our dally life.*

## **Now what is Western music**

Miya Tansen to the imperial court. Dhruwad is a Sanskrit name, derived from the

The history of Western music is primarily rooted in Greek and Roman antiquity, though music existed in virtually every culture long before this. Nevertheless, music was an important part of the lives of the ancient Greeks. Greek philosophers wrote about the power of music, the mathematician Pythagoras explored the mathematics behind musical sounds, and well-known Greek playwrights, such as Sophocles and Aristophanes, used music in their tragedies and comedies.

The Greeks and Romans had many musical instruments, including the lyre, harp, and the cornu horn, which were used in a variety of ceremonies and festivals. The Greeks also developed different systems of music notation, such as the more general harmonia and the more specific Dorian or Lydian, which were names after specific tribes and based upon unique modes, or the specific ordering of musical tones and their corresponding notes. All of these helped music to thrive, and it probably would have evolved in a different way if it hadn't been for two major factors: the birth of Christianity and the fall of Rome.

**So There are significant differences between the two. Also, there are exceptions to every point below, what we're concerned with are broad differences.**

## **Homophony vs. Polyphony / Melody vs Harmony**

Indian classical music is primarily homophonic, which means its focus is on melodies created using a sequence of notes. ICM's magic is primarily experienced with different melodies constructed within the framework of the Raagas, while western classical music's magic lies to a great extent in polyphonic composition, where counterpoint, harmony, and the texture created using multiple voices is critical. Melody exists in WCM too, but from a broad perspective, is not the singular or defining focus of most of WCM works.

## **Composed vs Improvised**

WCM is composed, ICM is improvised. All WCM compositions are formally written using the Staff Notation, and performers have virtually no latitude for improvisation. The converse is the case with ICM, where no "work" is ever written down, and the Teacher student tradition of learning ICM leads to each performance being an improvisation.

## **Vocals/Instrumentation**

Vocals are used in both the music, but the way they are treated in relation to other instrument is different. When vocal are used in ICM, all the other instruments are mere 'accompaniment'. There are tanpuras that act like drones, harmonium that follows the tonality of the voice by providing chords. Where as in WCM, when vocals are used, the instrumentation still carries a lot of weight in the overall composition.

In other words, voice forms the basis of the structure surrounding an ICM recital, whereas it is an addition to the instrumentally-generated structure of a WCM composition.

### **Rhythm**

ICM(Indian Classical Music) uses "Taal" – a cycle of beats centered around "Sam" that repeat itself. WCM(Western Classical Music) doesn't use such complex beats cycles.

### **Nature & Spirituality**

ICM has a closer, intimate association with nature than WCM. Ragas have specific times of days or seasons of the year associated with them, while most of the WCM doesn't have any such characteristic. ICM roots are spiritual, while secular works in WCM have roots in factors like individual experience, significant historical events, celebrations and so on.

### **Concluding Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore**

"For us, music has above all a transcendental significance. It disengages the spiritual from the happenings of life; it sings of the relationships of the human soul with the soul of things beyond. The world by day is like European music; a flowing concourse of vast harmony, composed of concord and discord and many disconnected fragments. And the night world is our Indian music; one pure, deep and tender raga. They both stir us, yet the two are contradictory in spirit. But that cannot be helped. At the very root nature is divided into two, day and night, unity and variety, finite and infinite. We men of India live in the realm of night; we are overpowered by the sense of One and Infinite. Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of everyday human joys and sorrows, and takes us to that lonely region of renunciation which lies at the root of the universe, while European music leads us a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy."

# MUSIC IN OUR DAILY LIFE

BY JAYOTI BHOWAL

Music... the language of Gods, it's the earliest form of language, the combination of sounds and the eventual flow of it, all of which creates music. It is so much a part of our lives, in all that we do and don't do, that normally we fail to appreciate its presence.



As a normal human, soaked in the social marshes... I plan to put forth a few examples how MUSIC creeps into my life. I am sure that after reading this you'll definitely feel some areas of similarity and say ... " this sounds familiar"

Take for example, as I lazily open my eyes to start my day.. what do I listen to? Music .. ofcourse. The familiar alarm tone of my mobile as it calls out to me to press the snooze button. I've heard crazy different alarm tones, from jinglings to forest sounds to flowing mountain springs, from bhajans to raps, it differs from person to person. Cut to waking up while travelling in a train.. What wakes you up? The call of the Chai-wala, that familiar Chai garam chai.. it is so unforgettable because it has a familiar tune in it. A tune that we invariably associate to train travel, right? The noise of the train too is nothing but music... Have you ever tried singing to that? There are so so many songs that you can humm to that sound. Back on my bed, as morning begins, there are so many other musical companions that join in. The three wheeler waiting for a passenger, with a popular hindi song playing on full blast in its music box, the school buses lining up to pickup the children for school, each with its own horn tune. The sound of bhajan flowing in from the neighbors puja room. Music is everywhere.

Don't we all remember the sweet sounds that Mom's bangles used to make, as she worked in the kitchen? That familiar puja bell in the distant temple and also the smaller bell tinkle of granny as she did arti in the puja room. On occasions the Panditji used to come, and he too chanted his mantras in a tune which invariably made us shake our heads slowly and clap our hands. The azaan from a distant masjid , calling for prayers is music, the choirs singing in the churches is music too. Even the pindrop silence of a meditation hall has a certain music, the hushed voices, the rustling feet, all makes the silence musical.

Going to office, or staying at home, both had music intertwined in them. The FM radio playing in the bus, the interspaced background tone of a metro station, the bus conductor yelling out the stop names, all seem to have a certain music. I know I am sounding crazy, but I feel every city has a different music of its own, which clearly depicts its average lifestyle. Don't we all remember the familiar noises of our city of birth? Just close your eyes for a minute and try to go back to it, the sounds of that familiar city will fill your heart, just try it once.

In the Bengali movie "Gupi Gayen Bagha Bayen" Satyajit Ray shows a kingdom where all are speechless. But still what we come across is a cattle boy ( rakhal ) playing a soul stirring tune on his flute. In the hindi film "Khamoshi" we see the life of a couple who are deaf n dumb. Still they enjoy music just by the vibrations. In ABCD ( a hindi film on dance) we see a deaf boy dancing just by listening to vibrations. This makes me think how blessed we all are that we can hear, see, smell n feel. It is unimaginable how the world would be if we had been deprived of any one of the five senses.

In innumerable films music has been the link between two lives, after rebirth. In stories of separated twins, music brings them together again, and even in silent films like "Pushpak" the background score does the job of dialogues. We see years pass by during a song, children growing up, seasons change, and also changes in relationships, all through the course of one song.

Through our growing up years, we all have our favourite songs and music. Why are advertisements so successful at marketing their products? Why is it that we still remember a product even though it is no longer in market? Because of its music. If we had met a special person during a song which was playing , THAT song becomes special, right? I remember, I was totally heartbroken when I went to see Baazigar, and among all the famous songs the film had, the only one I found best was " Chupana bhi nahi aata". That's the magic, and try as you may, there is always a song for all the phases and feelings of our life. We come across people who cant remember the lyrics, but still can sing . Also people who can't carry a tune, still they can express musically, don't we?

So, be it Granny's lullaby, ... " So ja Rajkumari", " Gudiya rani bitiya rani". Be it finding friends, " Yeh dosti hum nahi torengay", " Mujhko toh yaara teri yaari", , Be it falling in love, " Bhool gaya sab kuch", " Pyar manga hai tumhisey", " Nothings gonna change my love for you" , Be it heart break," Dilpe patthar rakhke", " Jeeta tha jiske liye", " Please forgive me", " Careless whispers", Be it holding our child for the first time , " Chanda hai tu ", MUSIC is right there beside us, infact it is inside us. Knowingly or unknowingly, it stays with us, through our ups n downs, good n bad. Leading us to happiness, holding us to safely, embracing us to love.

So, cheers to the MUSIC in us, and around us. Let us acknowledge this beautiful gift from God.



# THE EFFECT OF MUSIC ON MOOD, EMOTIONS AND NATURE

BY SRIMOYEE MUKHERJEE

Music has an immense effect on human mood forever. Music is to the soul what natural food is to health. It enriches life, endears one to God, enlivens one's spirit, refreshes the mind, exercises the body and mind. Researchers have pondered the possible therapeutic and mood boosting benefits of music for centuries. Even sad music brings most listeners pleasure and comfort, according to recent research. A lot of people turn to upbeat music whenever they feel sad or depressed, and it comes as no surprise why it is a viable solution for people feeling gloomy. For several years, music has made a lot of individuals happy. That's because soothing tunes foster the release of serotonin, a hormone that fosters happiness and a general sense of well-being. It also flushes the body with dopamine, a neurotransmitter that makes you feel good. Music also paves the way for the release of norepinephrine, a hormone that brings about euphoria and elation. With all the hormones that flood the body with happy thoughts, we do not have to purchase expensive anti-depressant medications just to feel better. Music can motivate us, music can reduce stresses and music can change our perception.

No form of music is as enriching as the Indian Classical forms that have a note for every mood of life with as deep a knowledge in theory and practice. There are different ragas in Indian music and each raga creates a different mood. Ragas can be really mysterious. Each 'raga' of classical music has unique abilities --- to soothe the mind, to invigorate us and to bring rain, fire or storm. Tansen was a great Hindustani musician who lived during Akbar's time. Tansen was one of the nine jewels in Akbar's court.



*Picture shows the stage inside Akbar's palace, Fatehpur-Sikri, Miya Tansen's abode. Akbar's palace stands in the backdrop ©Srimoyee Mukherjee*

The most special thing about Tansen was that he was a music magician. He had so much control over the "Ragas" that he could actually do astonishing feats by singing them. Once on the day of performance of Tansen, the hall was packed with courtiers and royal guests. People had come from far and near to hear the concert.

Tansen was waiting with his tanpura in hand and as soon as the Emperor entered and sat on the throne, the great musician began "alaap", the first portion of a raga. As he sang on, the surrounding air got warmer and warmer. The audience started perspiring. Leaves and flowers in the garden dried and fell to the ground.



Water in the fountains began to boil. Birds flew away in fright. The unlit lamps on the walls lighted up mysteriously and flames appeared in the air. People fled the court in terror while the fire generated by the raga raged on, burning the curtains to cinder. As the emperor got up and stood listening with awe, the rose that he often held in his hand drooped and died. Tansen's body was hot and feverish but, absorbed in Rag Deepak, he continued to sing vigorously. Such was the power of Rag Deepak, rightly named after 'flame'- the raga that brought fire on rendition. History has it that the flames of the raga were supposedly doused by yet another raga, Megh Malhar. As the name suggests, Megh Malhar gathered up the clouds and it rained, we all have heard about this story a lot! Besides performing in the court, Tansen is believed to have often sung alone for Emperor Akbar. At night he sang ragas that would soothe and help Akbar fall asleep, like the midnight raga Darbari works its magic with the help of minutely flattened intervals recalling the harmonic ambience of the blues. It is a deeply moving, emotionally intense raga with enough detail and nuance to repay repeated listening. Raga Darbari is a dialect of the original raga of Tansen. Many such mystic ragas are ascribed to Tansen. Ragas like Mian ki Malhar, Mian ki Todi and Darbari Kanada are the most famous and are existent today too.



*Picture shows the hand movements of a tabla player displaying maximum usage of hands. ©Srimoyee Mukherjee*

Because music can have such an impact on a person's mindset and well-being, it should come as no surprise that music therapy has been studied for use in managing numerous medical conditions like autism, dementia, depression etc. All forms of music may have therapeutic effects, although music from one's own culture may be most effective. In Chinese medical theory, the five internal organ and meridian systems are believed to have corresponding musical tones, which are used to encourage healing. Children diagnosed with Down syndrome are increasingly being given therapeutic approach at least to cover the problems like,

minimize stigma and isolation, to promote learning, to provide social competency and personal advocacy. The purpose of this cumulative study was to examine the effect of tabla training on the development of skills related to hand functioning of children with Down syndrome, wherein, the findings revealed that tabla training has great impact on hand functioning skills. Music has accompanied major social events throughout the history of mankind. Major gatherings such as weddings, graduations, or birthdays are usually recognized by a familiar tune. There is evidence that music plays a large role in emotional processes within the brain. Music resonates within the human spirit, at the heart of humanity is a song of the soul.

***Even the greatest scientist had a thought "If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music."*** - Albert Einstein.

# DOLCE HARMONY

BY SANKHADIP SENGUPTA

**Every major key has its relative minor.** Very simple phrase with a deep thought embedded inside.

## Why Relative?

The same reason my sibling is my relative. Common parent; common surname; common family. The catch here is common. The minor and major keys which are relatives have a common **key signature** –*The genetic code/blood relation in music.*

Let us take a simple example. The basic scale which we all know is C major (Bilawal Raag) – a scale with no **Sharp (Tivra)** and **Flat (Komal)** notes/swars.

The clue lies in the word **Komal (Soft/Diminished)** –we can correlate later with examples.

During Baroque/Classical period of western music pieces used to be composed in either major or minor keys. Later, composers realize that if the major key of a piece can modulate to a minor key and vice versa; music becomes more interesting. This was the beginning of Romantic Era in western music. However, in Indian Classical – this restriction wasn't there, and our ancient composers unfolded this trick long back to create Raagas. We can raise our collars for that. Even in The African Continent – who gave birth to Blues; blend of major and minor was very popular.

Later in leisure time you can explore the topic MODAL MUSIC ☺ and get mesmerized.

## Story Time:

Let us pick couple of Popular Songs to discuss.

**Alo amar alo** – A Rabindrasangit composed with all Suddh Swars (No accidental notes used). Suppose we choose scale C for the same to play. An arranger can stick to major chords for the entire song and yield a beautiful output. But one can choose to use minor chords in between to make it more emotive and harmonious. The Part – BAJE ALO BAJE O BHAI, where we can easily experiment with the major – minor mix and see the result. Wanna try?

**O Hansini** – The song is composed in minor key. The moment it enters the section “Meri Hansini kahan udh chali” – the key modulates to a major key; and again, comes back to tonic after this verse (the key at which song was composed).

Composers like Salil Choudhury; SD and RD Burman; Madan Mohan; Sudhin Dasgupta; Hemanta Mukhopadhyay; Kishore Kumar; Shyamal Mitra – were masters in using this trick to create immortal melodies.

I believe the invention of minor flavor was very crucial in music to create HARMONY. We teach our students “Minor means – pathos; emotions”. Well I leave it to the listeners to interpret the difference. Experiment for Today – listen to any of these two songs: 1) Anewala Pal – Jane and Naam gum jayega or 2) Navrai Majhi (from English Vinglish) and Tum Hi Ho or 1) Wind of Change and Comfortably Numb

After that analyse and see. Listen carefully; sing or play back; I am sure you will reveal ecstasy.

But there are exceptions. A famous old sad number by Mukesh Jee Anshu Bhari by Mukeshji, is composed on major key but the composer, C Ramchandra decorated the notes in a manner that the outcome was pathos 😊

Sometimes – when a minor chord is followed by its dominant chord; the resonance of pathos sustains. Do this experiment by playing D minor chord and then play A major or play A minor chord and then E major chord. After this exercise listen to the first interlude of Anewala Pal 😊.

All know that Kepler is associated with planetary laws he proposed in early parts of 1600 decades. What might be of surprise that he also proposed a relationship between heavenly movements and musical tones.

Kepler wrote a book titled “Harmony of the World” and its third chapter is devoted to origin of harmonic proportions in music.

#### INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS:

1. Planetary angular speed varies because orbits are elliptical
2. Most angular speeds vary in ratio of frequencies on a musical scale
3. Earth's angular speed varies at a ratio of 16:15, which is also a semitone ratio; it is as though earth is continually producing a trill with 3rd & 4th notes on a major scale
4. Orbits of Mars & Jupiter have an un-harmonic ratio of 18:19 (this not only puzzled Kepler but later got attributed as “Kepler's dissonance”). It was only 150 years after Kepler's death that the cause of dissonance was discovered – the asteroid belt between Mars & Jupiter

# BAND MUSIC IN BENGAL AND EVOLUTION

BY SAMRAT BRAHMA

This article is about birth, history and evolution of Bangla Band in West Bengal/Kolkata. Lets walk together to enlighten some aspects of this vast topic.

## Band Music in Kolkata history and origin:-

First band **Moheener Ghoraguli** was formed and played in many concerts. The band was inspired by **Bob Dylan** and many other western artists. Their music was a mixture of a wide variety of influences, including the Baul and folk traditions of Bengali and Rock.

Established in the 1970s during a period of stagnation in Bengali music, when commercial film songs were the dominant market force, the lyrics (and to some extent the compositions) of leader **Gautam Chattopadhyay** were radically new. They were of a very personal or social nature, similar to the urban folk movement led by **Bob Dylan** in the 60s. Though they were almost unknown in their time, in recent years they have undergone a critical re-evaluation much like the Velvet Underground. In recognition of this renewed interest, Gautam released a compilation of **Mohiner Ghoraguli** covers by contemporary artists, **Aabaar Bochhor Kuri Pore** in 1995. They have since come to be considered as one of the earliest Bengali rock band and pioneers of the jibonmukhi style and ethics. Their signature song **Prithibita Naki** is a reflection on how television creates urban alienation. It has been covered by many artists. This group was formed by a group of Kolkata musicians led by **Gautam Chattopadhyay** towards the end of 1974. Initially they called themselves "**Saptarshi**", and finally settled on the name "**Moheener Ghoraguli**" proposed by **Ranjon Ghoshal**. The name was borrowed from a poem "**Ghora**" by **Jibanananda Das**. The type of music that Moheener Ghoraguli pioneered though debatably had the seeds of now very popular "**Jibonmukhi gaan**" or "**Songs of ordinary life**".

## Band Members:-

Gautam Chattopadhyay – voice, lead guitar, saxophone, lyrics.

Pradip Chatterjee - bass guitar, flute.

Tapas Das – lyrics, voice, guitar.

Ranjon Ghoshal – lyrics, emcee, visuals, media relations.

Tapesh Bandopadhyay – voice, guitar, lyrics (till 1980).

Biswanath Bishu Chattopadhyay – drums, bass violin.

Abraham Mazumdar – piano, violin.

Raja Banerjee – (1979 onwards - Guitar, voice).





**Evolution:-**

Moheener Ghoraguli opened up a new vista for the Bengali audience who were searching for something different for quite some time. However, the band failed to hold on for long and dissolved after a few years, but not before changing Bengali music once and for all. In the 90's several Bangla Bands came into existence— the most notable of them are **Chandrabindoo**, **Cactus**, **Bhoomi** and **Fossils**. While Chandrabindoo, Castus and Fossils concentrate on Bengali Rock Music, Bhoomi emphasis on folk fusion. All the bands have emerged to be hugely popular not only in Bengal but also overseas where there is a considerable Bengali population. The first few years of the new millennium also saw the birth of more than one Bengali music bands like **Insomnia**, **Dohar** and **Madal**. Insomnia has strictly kept itself confined within the realm of New Age Rock Songs while both Dohar and Madal are associated with the folk songs of Bengal. Bengali music bands have an audience base that ranges from teenagers to retired people. The main reason behind the popularity of the Bangla Bands is that their music is really very simple and people connect with the lyrics easily. In most of the cases the songs, unlike conventional Bengali modern songs, are a manifestation of what a person faces in daily life. Right from the absence of the house maid to taking care of skin, from the shrinking of the society to the lost days of childhood, each and every aspect of life is presented in a simple, candid, and sometimes in a satirical way . The Bengali music bands nowadays perform all over the world, thus taking Bengali music to a new level and giving it a better exposure. In the last two decades the Bengali music industry has been changed to a large extent and it is the Bangla Bands that are chiefly responsible for that.

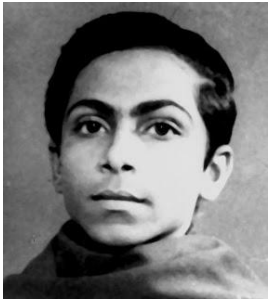
Popular Bands in West Bengal/Kolkata( Please click on each to know more about them)

<b>1970</b>	<a href="#">Moheener Ghoraguli</a>	<b>1990</b>	<a href="#">Abhilasha</a>
<b>1990</b>	<a href="#">Krosswindz</a>	<b>1991</b>	<a href="#">Chandrabindoo</a>
<b>1992</b>	<a href="#">Cactus</a>	<b>1998</b>	<a href="#">Fossils</a>
<b>1998</b>	<a href="#">Kalpurush</a>	<b>1999</b>	<a href="#">Bhoomi</a>
<b>1999</b>	<a href="#">Lakkhichhara</a>	<b>2001</b>	<a href="#">Prithibi</a>
<b>2001</b>	<a href="#">Escape Velocity</a>	<b>2002</b>	<a href="#">Insomnia</a>
<b>2002</b>	<a href="#">Maadal</a>	<b>2006</b>	<a href="#">Pseudonym</a>
<b>2007</b>	<a href="#">Chronic Xorn</a>	<b>2010</b>	<a href="#">Underground Authority</a>

# WHY SALIL CHOWDHURY IS THE GREATEST MULTI-FACETED INDIAN MUSICAL PERSONALITY OF ALL TIME?

BY DEBRAJ GANGULIE

5th September, 1995. Teacher's Day. The musical fraternity of India lost one of its greatest teachers. The man who single-handedly redefined the musical scenario in the country and brought a renaissance in modern music, one of the greatest lyricists and composers the country has ever produced, was no more. All musicians who have ever been in love with Indian music have learnt a lot from the creations of this man – the one and only Salil Chowdhury. He is my favourite composer and I am a huge admirer of his work, spanning over five decades. Here, I am going to write a note on why I feel that Salil Chowdhury, fondly known as Salil da, is the greatest multi-faceted Indian musical personality of all time and I strongly believe that after reading it you will also feel the same.



Born to middle class Bengali parents and having spent his childhood in the tea gardens of Assam, Salil da developed a profound interest towards music at a very young age. It was just the beginning of the 1940s when Salil da moved to Kolkata (then Calcutta) for doing his graduation. The Indian freedom movement against the British Raj was at its peak and Calcutta was one of the primary hubs of the movement.

Another huge political event, the Second World War was also going on at that time. Those were times of extreme global turbulence and it was difficult for the educated mass to remain silent. Everyone was motivated to fight the injustice towards humanity and put an end to the sufferings. Salil da was motivated to transform his political ideas and anguish into musical ideas and very soon his creations were capable of striking a chord in the hearts of the youth of Bengal. He joined the IPTA (Indian Peoples Theatre Association) which organized plays to protest against the prevalent political menaces and was one of the greatest performing arts movements in India. It was during this period that a lot of motivational songs, especially in Bengali language, were written and composed by Salil da. These songs were termed as ganasangeet or the songs of the masses. These pathbreaking songs having strong lyrics and unique musical arrangement, much ahead of their time, are still very relevant even in today's society.

Salil da was a trained instrumentalist. He had excellent skills in playing the flute, harmonium, esraj, piano and violin. He was a 'devotee' of Tagore and was a huge admirer of Tagore's songs. Before Salil Chowdhury came into the picture, the structure of Indian songs in particular was very different. The songs used to have a definite pattern of lyrics blended in a specific tune. But Salil da broke the traditional pattern and created a soundscape of his own, which was radically different from his contemporaries and much ahead of time. Rather I may call his compositions as timeless as even today the tunes or the musical arrangements don't feel like old school music. He was so modern in his approach! There was no typical Salil Chowdhury type of composition. Every composition was different and unique in structure and put forward a new facet of the composer. The application of notes and rhythm, and their combination and movement in a song was so unique that it was a huge source of inspiration for other great composers who followed his legacy.



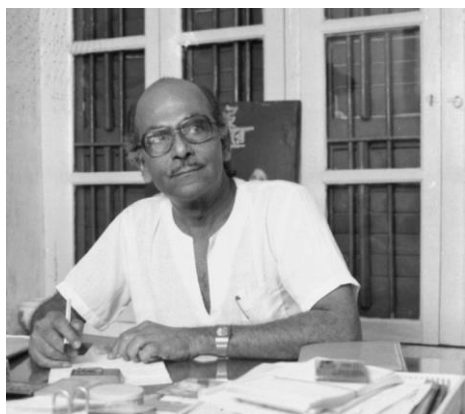
Constant experiments with song structure, note variation and the use of rhythm made his listeners go spellbound seventy years back and continue to amaze us even today.



Salil da's orchestration of songs has always been considered to be the best of its kind. His preludes/ interludes were also made with a lot of care and passion. He was the first composer to be known as a 'complete composer' who, apart from writing the lyrics, composed the song and also did magical instrumental arrangement. From the '50s to the '70s he composed numerous Bengali modern songs, which still remain unparalleled both lyrically and musically.

His collection of children's songs which were sung by his daughter Antara, is one of the highest selling albums in the history of Bengali music. Salil Chowdhury's collaboration with Lata Mangeshkar has been phenomenal. Salil da had written and composed several memorable songs for Lata ji, who was his favourite singer. On speaking about Lata ji, he once said that "she is capable of delivering anything a music maker can think of." Lata ji too was very fond of Salil Chowdhury as a composer and also as a human being.

In the late '50s, Salil da moved his place of work from Calcutta to Bombay (now Mumbai) and got his first break as a composer in Hindi films with **Do Bigha Zameen**, a national award winning and internationally acclaimed film, the story of which was also written by none other than the maestro himself. Very soon his unique style of creating music became very popular amongst the Hindi film audience and he started making music for a series of Hindi films. He won his first Filmfare award for best music director for the film **Madhumati** (1958). His popularity further spread its wings towards south India, where he composed music for a number of Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and mostly Malayalam films. Salil Chowdhury still is a very well-known figure in Malayalam music and his huge collection of Malayalam songs are extremely popular till date.



Salil Chowdhury was undoubtedly the most versatile musical genius, who instead of chasing fame and money, was only motivated to achieve perfection. That is why his work is relatively less in quantity but more in quality. He was one of the first Indian musicians to establish a perfect blend of western symphonies and Hindustani classical raga music into his compositions.

In one of his last interviews, he said, "When I put my first step in the world of music, I felt that I have to climb a huge tower to achieve my goal. Today, after trying to climb the tower for so many years, I still see that the tower above me remains as tall as it was back then." He was a very humble human being and shared a very good rapport with all singers, actors, film-makers and musicians he worked with. Great Indian singers and composers like Lata Mangeshkar, Mukesh, Kishore Kumar, Yesudas, Shankar-Jaikishan, R. D. Burman and A. R. Rahman went on record to praise Salil da. R. D. Burman always mentioned in his interviews that he had learnt the art of arranging music from Salil da and the Academy Award winning composer A. R. Rahman stated that listening to Salil Chowdhury's Malayalam songs has been a huge source of inspiration for him. In one of his immortal Bengali songs, Salil da had written that "I will leave my address with the storm." He is no more; but somewhere amidst the storm that his musical creations still create in the minds of his listeners, his identity remains prominent.