

Mehadi Hassan: The Legendary Name in The World of Ghazals



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Abstract

Born on 18 July 1927 in Luna village of Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, the ghazal emperor Mehdi Hassan inherited music from his ancestors. He belonged to the Kalavant Sangeet Gharana that had given to the world several great singers. He learnt music from his father Ustad Azim Khan and uncle Ustad Ismail Khan, in whose guidance Hassan started his music education.

Mehdi Hasan started singing Dhrupad at a very young age. He was awarded the title of 'Shahenshah-e-Ghazal' for his contribution to the world of Ghazal. Mehdi Hasan's family moved to Pakistan after the partition of Indo-Pak. Mehdi Hasan had two marriages. He has nine sons and five daughters. His six sons are associated with Ghazal singing and music.

The people of Luna village say that Mehdi Hasan had gone to Pakistan as a child and has been here three times since then. Mehdi Hassan also helped build two rooms in a government school in Luna village. Big music giants also conferred on him the title of Ghazal Emperor

Khan Sahab had the opportunity to sing for the first time in a ceremony in Fazilka in 1935, when he was only 8 years old. In this ceremony he sang Dhrupad and Khayal. Mehdi Hasan was honored with several awards. He was awarded the 'Tamga-e-Imtiaz' by General Ayub Khan, 'Pride of Performance' by General Zia-ul-Haq 'and' Hilal-e-Imtiaz 'by General Pervez Musharraf. In addition, India was awarded the 'Sehgal Award' in 1979.

The paper has much to develop an understanding of the people about Mehadi Hassan and his ghazals in addition to his knowledge of the classical music that enhanced the Hindustani music, and that made him an established singer and vocalist.

Keywords: Legendary, Ghazal, Hindustani Sangeet, Nawab, International Fame and Repute

Introduction

A member of the famous *kalawant* family stretching back 16 generations, Mehadi Hassan proved himself to be a self-made man through his original ghazal creations. His father and uncles were known to be singing for the *nawabs* and *maharajas* from Jaipur to Indore, and even Nepal. Hence, the cultural and musical heritage of the family helped Mehadi Hassan to join music as his career. He did not keep himself limited to the court-singing for the pleasure of the nawabs and kings, rather exposed himself to other non-musical aspects of life that followed.

Just at the time when he was barely six years old, he showed the signs of his inheriting the family tradition of singing through his stage performances. In order that he could prove himself different from others, he underwent a long formal training of singing, and thus, developed his lung capacity. After partition, he came to be known as a Pakistani singer. He sang in many of the royal courts encompassed in Pakistan territory.

Immediately after the partition, he was forced to lead an unpleasant life with paucity of money, name and fame. He was forced even to work there as a mechanic of cycles and motorcycles.

His landing in Bahawalpur again allowed him to gratify his passion for music. He worked hard to earn his livelihood and to keep continuing his singing practice. Hard work always pays, and it is absolutely right about Mehadi Hassan who rose to be a celebrated vocalist of Hindustani music and an established ghazal singer. His destiny made him a famous star through the film *Azmat* released in 1973.

His ghazal with the words- Zindagi mein to sabhi pyar kiya kartay hain mein to mar kar bhi meri jaan tujhay chahoon gaa, makes him an immortal figure in the world of ghazals. In addition, radio, films and concerts added grace to his personality. Though he settled down in Lahore, but the disappointments he met there forced him to leave it and to settle down somewhere else.

At present, Mehadi Hassan is a popular name in the world. His ghazals soothe not only the young and romantic, but also the aged. His ghazals are a reflection on the various aspects of human life, and especially on the undying love and affection.

Review of Literature

Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (1990), in *Musical Gesture and Extra-Musical Meaning: Words and Music in the Urdu Ghazal*, calls for making explicit the ideational framework as well as the performative function of a vocal genre, both of which inform the way its musical idiom serves to communicate a text in performance. The ghazal, subject of this case study, is the principal poetic form in Urdu; it is set to music in a number of related but distinct genres. Illustrated by a set of transcribed and translated examples, the analytical procedure first considers the text-music structure as a performance idiom that is subject to the cultural-historical background norms of Urdu poetry on the one hand and North Indian "light" music on the other. The second stage considers each particular genre in terms of its idiom's specific function in performance. The general conclusion is that music linked to ghazal poetry is structurally constrained by the text as performed, but that purely musical features articulate, and thus link, the text with the content of its performance. Hence ghazal music represents a synthesis of text and context in its embodiment of features drawn from both and expressed directly through a unique vocabulary of musical gestures.

The Editor of *Himal Southasian* (Jan. 25, 2011), in *Jugalbandi: Divided scores*, writes that Hindustani *sangeet* is an ancient art form that is performed and appreciated today across the modern political and socio-cultural borders of the region – representing a true Southasian cultural exchange. It might not necessarily be known as the 'music of the people', having traditionally been patronised largely by the elite, but its basic grammar – the *swaras* (notes), *ragas* (modes), *talas* (time cycles), instruments and compositions – is used in multiple styles throughout the region. Hindustani *sangeet* cannot be identified with any specific cultural or religious identity, nor a particular era. Rather, it has evolved over many centuries, having undergone considerable transformation in the 12th and 13th centuries due to influence from Central Asia, and then again in the 20th century with the introduction of modern media such as gramophone recordings, radio and cinema.

Ziya us Salam (June 13, 2012), under the title *A Voice that knew no border*, reports that Known as the Ghazal King, Mehdi Hassan was a Pakistani. But to say he belonged only to Pakistan is like saying the legend of Heer Ranjha is Pakistani. The roots of Mehdi Hasan's music, which inspired generations of ghazal singers in India, lay in the ancient tradition of

dhruwad. A representative of the 16th generation of the Kalavant clan, Mehdi Hassan went from dhruwad, through thumri to ghazal and popular film music, retaining the purity of the medium until the end. Hindustani classical music pre-dates the Partition of India; it stems from the soul of the subcontinent and it is to this shared past that he belonged.

His own family roots were in Rajasthan. He may have made his home in Pakistan but Rajasthan stayed with him. It was like love across the salt desert. And he made no secret of it. His concerts almost always featured Kesariya Balam, the timeless Rajasthani ode to the vastness of the desert. And his voice, especially in his classic *Ranjish hee sahee* conveyed the loneliness of a companion left behind in the desert. He sought that lost companionship whenever he visited India. He was a good friend of legendary classical vocalist Pandit Mani Prasad, whose disciple Jitender Singh Jamwal told *The Hindu* that the two always conversed in Rajasthani. His music retained an Indianness throughout. Contrary to the Islamic injunction against prostration, Mehdi Hassan often gave blessings to upcoming singers who sought them by touching his feet. He was steeped in the traditions of his music gharana. That tradition was paramount for him, not any religious dictate. Mehdi Hassan often sang the compositions of Delhi's resident poet Mirza Ghalib besides Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mir Taqi Mir. His Urdu was untouched by any regional accent and stayed true to the true spirit of the language.

Objectives of The Study

1. To develop an understanding of the Hindustani Sangeet and to reflect it through the study
2. To concentrate and focus on the ghazal-singing as a major trend of music
3. To highlight the role of Urdu authors, poets, and shayars in encouraging the ghazal singing
4. To explore the names of the Pakistani ghazal singers
5. To emphasize the contribution of Mehadi Hassan to the Hindustani Sangeet
6. To discuss the making of the personality of Mehadi Hassan as a ghazal singer
7. To point out the specific features of the singing of Mehadi Hassan
8. To identify the major achievements of Mehadi Hassan
9. To produce the short biography of Mehadi Hassan
10. To interpret the status of Mehadi Hassan as a ghazal singer

Hypothesis

1. Hindustani Sangeet is an established school of music
2. Ghazal is a major trend in the Hindustani Sangeet
3. The contribution of the Urdu authors in the enhancement of the ghazal as a trend of singing and music is so immense
4. There are several Pakistani ghazal singers and shayars to enhance the ghazal-singing
5. Mehadi Hassan's contribution to the Hindustani Sangeet is worth praising

6. Circumstances turn one to arts like music
7. Mehadi Hassan's ghazals are characterized by their classical note
8. To the name and account of Mehadi Hassan, there are several awards and achievements
9. Mehadi Hassan's biography is a great source to know about him
10. Mehadi Hassan's status as a ghazal singer remains uncontroversial.

Methodology

Designed and prepared on the basis of the secondary data found available in the various articles, theses, newspapers reports and studies, the paper serves as a comprehensive study on Mehadi Hassan. The study is scientific in nature, as it follows all the steps involved in the social science research. Attempts were made to maintain objectivity throughout the study. In addition to the other common steps undertaken for the purpose, the special emphasis was made on the collection, classification and content analysis of the selected studies that helped the author arrive at the fruitful conclusion and findings on the selected title and theme. The paper being a review article, reviews the selected studies and reports and interprets all this in the context of Mehadi Hassan's contribution to the Hindustani Sangeet that is characterized by its own features and trends.

Findings

1. Hindustani Sangeet is an established school of music which has its own approach and implications to be followed by the artists associated with it
2. Of the various trends prevailing in the Hindustani Sangeet, the Ghazal is a major trend which is characterized by its own specific features relating to ragas, notes, soul-expression
3. The role of the Urdu authors, poets, and shayars across the world, and especially of Pakistan in encouraging the ghazal singing and in

establishing it as a major trend of music is so immense and worth praising

4. Music knows no boundaries of nations, castes, religions etc.
5. Some of the eminent Pakistani ghazal singers include- Nurjahan, Mehadi Hassan, Gulam Ali etc. who made the world of ghazals so colourful and beautiful with the flavor of their distinct singing
6. Mehadi Hassan is a name in the world of Ghazals whose distinct singing of ghazals has won him an envied popularity and fame in the world
7. Mehadi Hassan got the heritage of music from his forefathers whose singing styles and devotion inspired him in a way that he eventually could not help joining the world of music and to carry on the family traditions
8. Classical note is the specific feature of all the ghazals of Mehadi Hassan, and reflect the various moods of the singer
9. Mehadi Hassan was honored not only in his own country, but in the other countries of the world including India
10. He was honoured with several awards that he won as a result of his devotion to music and ghazal singing
11. Mehadi Hassan's biography is a mirror to reflect his upbringing and to the making of his personality as a ghazal singer
12. Mehadi Hassan will always be remembered for his contribution to music.

References

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