

## **"Why I Like...": Some Responses**

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**T**he wide appeal of a film song is an accepted fact. I therefore proposed to collect responses to film songs from various personalities, mostly in the performing arts. The idea was to ask people to choose one of their favourite songs and to comment on important aspects of the song. Of those approached, 15 responded, and their comments on the songs of their choice provide an interesting reading. The comments also have some bearing on the socio-cultural significance of Hindi film songs. Some common features in the responses, and some observations on them, are made below:

1. Most of the respondents felt that to single out a film song as their favourite song was difficult.

2. Most of the people forming the sampler had not seen the films to which their favourite songs belonged. Visual memories were practically absent—the compositions appealed to them as good songs. Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar, however, referred to picturization as an important criterion to judge a film song. Sarla Bhide added a similar remark to her own comment: "When I saw the film, I felt that the freshness of the song had been enhanced". On the other hand, Kanak Rele experienced "thorough disappointment" when she actually saw the film to which her favourite song belonged. However, she maintained that this did not affect her judgement of the song. Kalpana Desai seemed to suggest that picturization was not an important factor in assessing the song of her choice, even though she had seen the film to which it belonged.

3. Table I brings out the fact that many of the favourite songs belong to the 1960s. It is significant that this period saw the emergence or continuing presence of composers like Sachin Dev Burman, O.P. Nayyar, Anil Biswas, Shanker-Jaikishan, Madan Mohan, Roshan, Chitragupta, Avinash Vyas, Salil Chowdhury, C. Ramchandra, Vasant Desai, Hemant Kumar, Sardar Malik, Hansraj Behl, etc. In this connection, a comment made by Sarita Joshi is revealing. Though she selected a song from the 1980s as her favourite, she felt that the effectiveness of the song was to be ascribed to its power to evoke film melodies from the 1960s!

4. Probably the age of the respondents also played a role in their choice of songs. The respondents seem to have selected songs heard in their impressionable years—early youth or a little later.

5. The sampler, though limited in number, covers a wide chronological range, from 1936 to 1990. Some early voices such as Surendranath, Bibbo, Noorjehan, K.L. Saigal and Reshma also figure in the list. The voices better known and remembered today—those of Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mahmood, etc.—expectably also occur in the list.

6. Eight of the 15 selected melodies are by Lata Mangeshkar—an obvious pointer to the artist's predominance and her popularity. Possibly her solos are preferred to her duets.

The responses organized in Table II clearly indicate the multiple appeal of a film song. Certain observations can be made on this basis:

1. It can be argued that a song is preferred for many factors operating simultaneously. For example, P.L. Deshpande notes that his favourite song, 'Ye zindagi usi ki hai', "is a rare fusion of an anguished tone, rich and efficient voice, straight picturization, skilful yet simple instrumentation".

2. Tune, as the melodic framework is usually described, finds the most important place in the responses. Very often, the tune is discussed though the voice or words are not commented upon (see the responses of Yashwant Dev, Sai Paranjpe, etc.). In fact, in order of preference, tune is followed by instrument, voice, song, structure, word, effect, picturization, and tone.

3. A careful examination of Table II brings out the different ways in which various aspects of a song (namely, voice, instruments, tune, tone, words, picturization, mood/effect, and song-structure) are appreciated. For example, the various adjectives employed to describe the voice of a singer may suggest a scale of preferred qualities in a singer's voice. In fact, a vertical examination of each column, pertaining to various aspects of a song, may yield a hierarchy of criteria used by respondents representing a wide spectrum of backgrounds and professional specializations.

4. To some extent, I thought it possible to view the responses and the respondents' professions as mutually dependent. For example, Yashwant Dev, a composer and lyricist, has chosen to analyze the impact of his favourite song in terms of balance and harmonic support. He points out the technical features of the song as a structure and makes a useful comment on the correspondence between the literary content and the musical structure of the song. He points out that "the last line of the *antara* repeats the *mukhda* musically because the line has a literary content similar to the content of the *mukhda*".

In the case of Nandu Bhende, who has studied Western music and has

been active as a composer, it seems natural that he should be impressed by a song which effectively uses strategies employed in Western music. As he puts it: "The use of chromatics is, I think, unusual in Hindi film music.... The use of nonsense syllables to convey emotions, etc... could be some of the reasons why I like the song".

Kanak Rele, a dancer, chooses a song ('*Madhuban mein Radhika nache re*') with a direct bearing on dance. Interestingly, this song, set in *raga* Hamir, reminds her of the Sopana *parampara*, a tradition of art music in Kerala and surrounding regions. Further, the word '*nache*' (dances) in the composition helps her visualize a dance movement.

Prabha Atre elaborates on the voice, the style, and the musical treatment given to words—perhaps an indicator of her musical training and affinities with the Kirana *gharana* of music.

Bharat Dabholkar—a media person and dramatist—lays stress on the effect or the mood created by the song. He practically relegates the other components such as voice, words, etc. to the background.

Madhubhai Patel, a folklorist and collector of folk songs from south Gujarat, is attracted by the folk element. He, in fact, suggests that not knowing the language of a song is hardly an impediment in enjoying it, especially when it is from the folk category of music.

P.L. Deshpande, a versatile personality in theatre, literature, and music, refers to many factors which contribute to the final impact of the song of his choice. And yet his mention of its links with the music of the past is interesting: "It is also possible that '*Ye zindagi*' immediately impressed me because of its striking resemblance with a song in *Sharda*, a Marathi play."

It is obvious that analysis of the musical impact of a film song, a musical form of multiple dimensions—can hardly be an entirely aesthetic examination. In fact popular music, the parent category to which the film song belongs, does not lend itself to undiluted aesthetic judgement. Not only does the sampler have to be considerably wide, it also has to include informants from many language areas. Equally important would be the examination of the contribution of improved recording techniques. The popularity of a recorded song is surely affected by its recording—how faithfully it captures the timbres of voices and instruments, and the various other subtle nuances of music-making. Finally, the frequent choice of the songs of certain composers (Naushad, Madan Mohan, Salil Chowdhury, etc.) by our respondents may also have to do with the emergence of these composers as new forces in film music in an earlier period. Novelty as well as significance both play an important role in creating that elusive phenomenon—popularity.

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## Comments

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**PRABHA ATRE***'Jawan hai muhabbat'*

I first heard the song as a child, on the gramophone, at somebody's house. I had instantly liked it then. I also like it today when I have gained some knowledge and experience in music.

The song has a catchy tune based on *raga* Pahadi. A clear melodic approach, common in those days, is observed. The song is a good example of a perfect blend of classical and folk music.

The rhythm is lively. Abrupt breaks are built in at the right places. Percussion is used only with the voice and not in the interlude



between the two stanzas.

The singer has a medium-pitched natural voice. It is sensuous, intimate, extremely expressive and flexible. The way the words '*muhabbat*' and '*dil ne*' are uttered creates a tremendous impact. Noorjehan has rendered with precision the complex phrases and movements. This obviously shows her training in classical music. At any pitch, her voice is clear and tuneful, the words are clearly delivered. She has of course her individual, inimitable, arresting style.

The words successfully create a happy, romantic mood, which pervades the entire song.

**BADRI NARAYAN***'Tumhi ne mujhko prem sikhaya'*

I heard the song on the gramophone some time when I was nine or ten (around 1938-39)... the impression has stayed somewhere deep in my memory.

It's a simple melody (derived from Bhimpalasi?). The words are expressive and suggest a derivation from popular poetry. The voice is natural and unaffected.

However, I don't remember having seen the film.

Another thing I like about the song is that some dialogue is interspersed between the singing of the duo.

**NANDU BHENDE***'Aha rim jhim ke'*

The song has appealed to me since my childhood and continues to attract me even today. I had never attempted to analyze it till now. I feel that the following could possibly be the reasons why I like it so much:

- i. the innocence the singer conveys in his delivery;
- ii. the use of a very 'light' rhythm which gives the song a bouncy feel without its being overdone;
- iii. the simple orchestration which is also very effective;
- iv. the use of both the *nishads* in quick succession, which makes the melody very intimate and curious;



- v. the use of chromatics which is, I think, unusual in Hindi film music;
- vi. the use of onomatopoeia in the lyrics which further enhances its catchy nature;
- vii. the use of nonsense syllables to convey emotions, etc.

These could be some of the reasons why I like the song. However, it's really impossible to judge these things correctly because your own growth as a listener since you first heard a song plays a large part in the assessment. Your state of mind, age, background, personality, the associations the song brings back—every single thing plays a very important role in determining your like or dislike. This is true especially in music.

#### SARLA BHIDE

'O Sajana'

'O Sajana...' the attractive curve of melody as the song begins arouses curiosity. The Sitar part which follows conveys the effect of rain.



I like the freshness everywhere in the song. The voice has the innocence and enthusiasm of youth. In the film, Sadhana, the heroine, who sings the song, looks tender. The voice seems to be her own. The song is also beautifully picturized. When I saw the film I felt that the freshness of the song had been enhanced. I liked the song even more.

The phrase '*aisi rimjhim*' has a pure Western touch. But Salil Chowdhury has blended it well with our own music. The song reaches its climax at '*tumko*' ('... *pukare mere*') and at '*sanvali*' ('... *saloni ghata*').

The music director has however made some unforgivable mistakes. He has not followed grammar. For example, '*tumko*' is a *laghu* word. But he has elongated the word in his composition. But the song is otherwise composed beautifully. It instantly touches the heart.

#### BHARAT DABHOLKAR

'*Wo bhuli dastan lo phir yad a gayi*'

I first heard the song on the radio but haven't seen the film. Besides its being a good combination of tune, words, voice, and instrumentation, one thing about the song



that appeals to me a lot is that, in spite of its being sad and full of pathos, it has a racy, lilting tune which yet combines with the theme in a unique and pleasant manner.

#### KALPANA DESAI

'*Thade rahio*'

I saw the film in 1978, but have no distinct memory of the picturization. The song is a good adaptation of semi-classical music in films. It's therefore one of the songs that I've liked best. The song has an attractive tune, voice, words, etc.

P.L. DESHPANDE:

'Ye zindagi usi ki hai'

I first heard the song when my versatile friend Shri Vasant Rao Deshpande hummed it for me and insisted that I go and see the film at least for the song.



I became addicted to the song and it continues to haunt me. The song is a rare fusion of an anguished tone, a rich and efficient voice, straight picturization, skilful yet simple instrumentation. I feel that C. Ramchandra, who was a close friend, arrived at 'musical truth' in two of his films—*Albela* and *Anarkali*.

It is also possible that 'Ye zindagi' immediately impressed me because of its striking resemblance with a song in *Sharda*, a Marathi play.

YASHWANT DEV

'Ap ki nazron ne samjha'

1. The *sthai* and *antaras* present a case of key relationships which are fascinating because they confuse the listener, at least initially. The background harmonic support resolves the apparent confusion about the fundamental key employed by the composer from the beginning of the second line. He also goes to the *tar madhyam* to finally resolve the indecision created. The song touches a lower note at 'ye faisla' or 'manzil ap hain', which is further balanced by the employment of the *tar madhyam*.



2. It is also significant that the last line of the *antara* repeats the *mukhda* musically because the statement has already been made in the first two lines of the *antara*. This is economy of words as well as tune.
3. It is to be noted that the lyric was composed before the tune and yet there is no distortion of the metrical mould.

G.N. JOSHI

'Babul mora, naihar chhooto hi jaye'

I remember a music conference held at Allahabad some time in the 1940s. I had come to attend the conference from Bombay and K.L. Saigal had come from Calcutta. Both of us sang at the conference. The organizers had provided us a bungalow on the banks of the Ganga. We were up that night and had already been singing, just for



ourselves, up to 2 or 2.30 a.m. Then I prompted Saigal to sing '*Babul mora*', and he said: "I will sing only if you sing along with me." And we sang '*Babul mora*' till daybreak.

I have always been fascinated by classical music. '*Babul mora*', based on *raga Bhairavi*, offers a lot of scope for developing the sentiment of pathos.

Saigal has ably portrayed the sorrow of a father who bids farewell to a daughter after her wedding. Though a film song has its own limitations, Saigal has done full justice to the song. His serious bass voice has indeed helped him in the rendering.

#### SARITA JOSHI

*'Ho priya priya'*

I heard the song for the first time at the trial of the film.

The best part of the song is its tune. The



words are also good. The intensity of the emotions is well captured in this sweet melody. The tune reaches out to you in a unique way and you find yourself humming the tune at any time, for days together.

The words of this duet remind you of film duets of one-and-a-half or two decades ago. They are very refreshing and appealing.

#### SAI PARANJPYE

*'Chingari koi bhadke'*

The beautiful blend of thought, express-



ion, and melody makes this song from *Amar Prem* my favourite. It has haunted me ever since I first heard it.

#### MADHUBHAI PATEL

*'Lambi judai char dinon ka'*

My heart swelled with grief and I wept bitterly when I first heard the song, though I didn't know what the words meant. Just the tune and the voice of the singer, full of the pain of separation, touched my heart.

The most impressive part of the song comes at the words '*Lambi judai*': the words express their meaning through the musical composition! The singer portrays the pathos which an unhappy lover would feel in separation. The singer's voice filled my heart with the same pain. This is the only film song that has made me weep.

When the singer comes to the words





'*Lambi judai*' she lengthens the last syllable, '... ai', and repeats the best part of the line: '*haye lambi judai*'.

The composer has used *tivra madhyam*, stopping at the upper *sa*, then come to *dhaivat*, *pancham*, and *tivra madhyam*, and again employed a fleeting touch of *komal gandhar*. This has made the song memorable.

#### KANAK RELE

'*Madhuban mein Radhika nache re*'

I first heard the song on the radio when I was about 16. I was stunned. Though I knew very little about the Kathakali, Sopana, or Mohiniattam traditions at that time, I could visualize the [dance] movements. The utterance of the word '*nache*' suggests a curve and a clear dance movement.



I knew that the song was based on *raga* Hamir. I remember seeing the film immediately after I had heard the song. (Another strong reason for this was that my favourite hero, Dilip Kumar, was in it.) Incidentally, the heroine (Meena Kumari) danced horribly. It was a thorough disappointment. I had to shut my eyes.

The song-type is comparable to the *ando-lika*. Every time I listen to the song, it reminds me of the Sopana *parampara*.

The Indian mind is such that we are carried away by any words about Krishna, any story or music about Krishna. I am

fascinated by the words of the song and by its use of consonants. Then of course come the tune of the song, the structure, etc.

#### SHRUTI SADOLIKAR-KATKAR

'*Pyar kiya to darna kya*'

The song has its own strength. It was its grandeur that appealed to me from the beginning. Madhubala—with that expression in her eyes and her movements—has not



only enacted the song well, but has taken it to great heights. Imagine [the situation]... she is challenging the King [in a conflict of classes]. Prithviraj [as King Akbar] and Dilip Kumar [as Salim] also respond rightly.

Though I knew the song much earlier, I watched the film quite recently—a few years back. I started liking the song even more. It is among those rare songs in films which you feel are *inevitable*. Generally songs are added on to show the dance talents of actresses or for mere entertainment. Madan Mohan's songs are good by themselves, but they are usually picturized poorly. For example '*Tum jo mil gaye ho*'—Mohammad Rafi's song in *Hanste Zakhm*—is very effective as a song. It uses good voice patterns, instruments, etc., but the actual film upsets you.

'*Pyar kiya to darna kya*' is a finished product. It gets to the core of the theme—love—which is universal.

You are impressed when you see the film.



When the song comes on, you have a premonition of coming events. This is the only coloured sequence in the film. Madhubala's figure is reflected in the mirrors arranged in a circle around her. The universal appeal of love is thus portrayed. The song makes good use of chorus and brings out the sweetness and innocence of Lata's voice. The song is a perfect blend of voice and orchestra, and of Western and Indian music. I like the song because it serves a purpose in the situation.

AJIT SHETH

*'Barse ghana sari rat'*

Vanraj gave me a recorded spool of the song to hear when I was producing a half-hour film-music-based sponsored programme for Vividh Bharati titled *'Kohinoor Geet Gunjar'*.

The song is a unique experiment in the blending of *raga*-based Indian melody with a symphonic structure of instrumentation. The instrumental music here is not just an interlude-link in between the *antaras*, or an introduction to the *mukhda*. It is a part of the entire structure of the song, and is also present beneath the vocal rendition. It continues throughout the length of the composition.

The song is composed in 12 *matras*. It is a blend of *ragas* Jogia and Mand, with a shade of Bhimpalasi in the beginning and at the end.

Written by the well-known Hindi poet Shri Raghuvir Sahay, the song is in blank verse. Setting to tune a poem in blank verse is no easy task, but Vanraj has carried out the experiment successfully. The result is haunting—the most memorable song that has ever come out of the film industry.