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Padmini with Sushant Ray and V. Shantaram: A marriage proposal?

Andhaa Kanoon... and someone...
that one achievement made all of
Rajesh Khanna's lot of new films
seem insignificant in comparison.

There are at least three of them
head over heels in love with him
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What makes 'Pancham' tick?

By
CHAITANYA D. PADUKONE

BE it a blockbuster like *Sholay* or a disaster like *Swami Dada*, his musical creations are marked by a brilliant brand of showmanship and an unconventional streak. With a penchant for bold, bizarre tunes, Rahul Dev Burman's compositions are in sharp contrast to those of his father, maestro Sachin Dev Burman, whose classical gems are legendary. Now celebrating his silver jubilee year in Hindi films and also his first-ever Filmfare trophy, Pancham (RD's pet name) has often faced the music of his luckless phases.

A rich repertoire that ranges from the sizzling "Dum Maro Dum" (*Hare Rama Hare Krishna*) to the lively "Jai Jai Shiv (Aap Ki Kasam)" as also the hilarious "Ek Chatur Naar" (*Padosan*), has asserted his versatile worth. Come disco-wave and Pancham swayed to the times with his swinging super-hits like "Aa Dekhe Zara" (*Rocky*) and "Jaane Jaan" (*Sanam Teri Kasam*). When cynics dismissed him as a "jazzy juggler" who plagiarised Western sound tracks, he produced classical surprises like "Mere Naina Sawan" (*Mehboobo*), "Piya Bawre" (*Khubsoorat*), and "Huzoor Iskadar" (*Masoom*). The cupid sense in him culled out warm serenades like "Humey Tumse Pyar" (*Kudrat*), "Teri Yaad Aa Rahi" (*Love Story*) and "Jaane Jaan" (*Jawani Diwani*).

Not content with just composing, Pancham ventured into vocals. Alternating between macho strident and high-pitched altos, his innovative melodies are a rage with juvenile buffs. One can't forget that he was "instrumental" in boosting the images of Rajesh Khanna (*Kafi Patang* and *Apna Desh*) and even a struggling Amitabh (*Bombay to Goa*). Singers like Bhupendra and Amit Kumar have won their laurels under R.D.'s baton.

Pancham was supervising the background score "arrangement"

for Ravi Chopra's *Mazdoor* when I met him for this tele-a-tete. An ebullient but sensitive man in his early 40s, he was devoid of star mannerisms. Affable and self-effacing, he was clad in a casual outfit that knocked several years off his age. After a few drags on his favourite 555 cigarette and sips of coffee, he tuned himself for a conver-session:

Excerpts from the interview:-
Why was the Filmfare Award eluding you for the past 25 years?

Sheer bad luck and a series of miscarriages. Every year I had at least two nominations in the poll and I missed the bandwagon every time. I expected the award for films like *Amar Prem*, *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, *Yaadon Ki*

That night, I wept with joy. And also because I had fulfilled Sachinda's dream.

Looking back at the olden days and the present system, what major changes do you notice?

In those days, emphasis was given to lyrics and there was very little music. There was a dearth of expert artistes and the whole system was slow and conservative. The songs were first recorded and then accordingly picturised.

Nowadays it's totally different. Before the song is recorded the director explains the whole scenario, the camera movement, the action involved, etc., which means a song is like a fusion of background score and choreo-

tion and something usually flows out. I have composed numerous songs in my dreams. Whenever I have woken up from this tune-ful trance, I have immediately taped it all. Then the next day I discuss it with my assistants and we finalise the notations. Folk music has also influenced me, a great deal.

You have often plagiarised Western tunes. Isn't that unethical?

In a creative profession, one cannot work in a mental vacuum. But if you carefully observe, I take only the first line and the rest is all my own. I don't have a complex about admitting this.

When I went to San Francisco, leading jazz artistes told me that there was lots of melody in Indian classical music which they wished to adapt to their style. They felt that their music lacked euphonic melody. You would be amazed to know that a Japanese group has copied the melodies of *Aradhana*. I have their record. But certainly, most of the time you have to be original and develop your own exclusive style.

Do you approve of the disco-wave invasion. Is it just a passing phase?

First it was the rock-n-roll, then the cabaret and now it's disco. I feel it has added a new dimension to film music but it cannot last, unlike those ever-green immortal hits of yester-years.

The directors give us the disco sequence and we have to compose. I only lament the loss of lyrical value because of the heavy percussion rhythm and gimmicks that form part of disco music. Until some other mania displaces it, disco will go on. Basically, I hate composing for cabarets. Classical music is my forte.

In that case why haven't you tried singing classical songs to supplement your gruffy and altos range?

I had always wanted to have an exceptional style of my own. During my childhood I hated the "tabla" but admired the voice of Louis Armstrong. Later, I

(contd. on p. 10)



R.D. Burman: Silver jubilee year and first Filmfare party

Beaat and Parichay. Maybe it was destined to coincide with my 25th year in films.

Were you expecting it this time? What was your reaction?

I really lost all hopes and consoled myself by reminding myself that what is more important is rewards and not awards. My fans are my rewards. The winner *Sanam Teri Kasam* was not exactly one of my best films — it was more of an electronic frenzy. Nevertheless, I was thrilled when I was informed about my trophy. That night, I wept I was informed about my trophy.

graphy. We have electronic sound recordings and intricate musical "arrangements." It is now possible to improve voices and sounds and give them a new identity through computerised processing.

Your father sought inspiration from hunting expeditions. What makes you tick?

Anything goes to inspire me. Honking horns, throbbing mobikes and of course, extensive listening to foreign music. When I am told about the various situations, my subconscious mind keeps humming and I visualise myself in that particular situa-