

NEHA MALUDE

Manna Dey

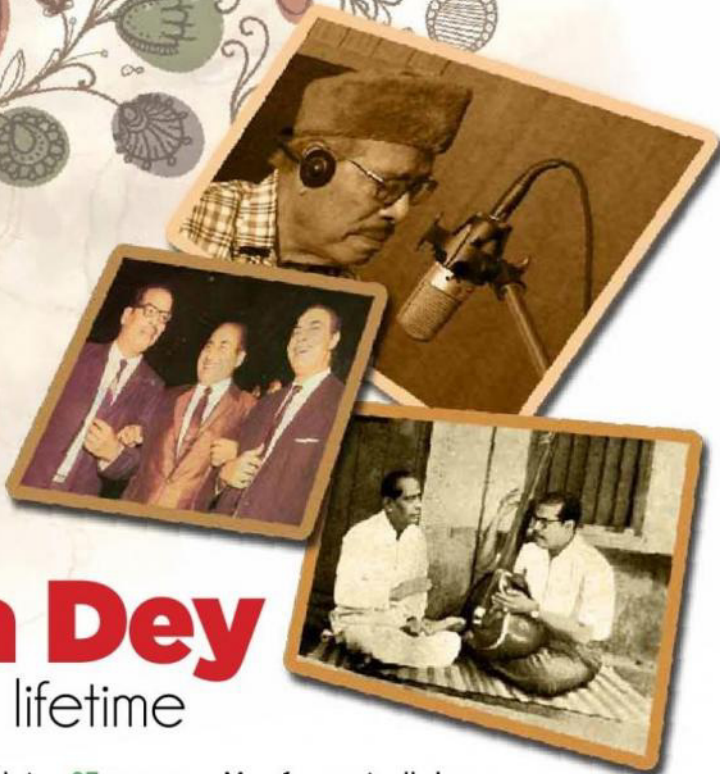
The love of a lifetime

As the music maestro completes 93 years on May 1, we stroll down memory lane to get a glimpse of his lifelong affair with music.

The flirtatious *Ae Meri Zohrajabeen* that makes you fall in love again, the exuberant *Aao Twist Karein*, the heart-wrenching *Ae Mere Pyare Watan*, the impish *Ek Chatur Naar* that leaves you in splits or the unassuming *Lapak Jhapak Tu* that leaves you amazed – there isn't an emotion Manna Dey's voice can't elicit.

GEET HAI YE ZINDAGI

Childhood is a time for fun and games and it was no different for little Manna. The boy excelled at wrestling and boxing and was a practical joker. But music entered his early life surreptitiously. Manna would often listen in while his uncle *Sangeetacharya Sri Krishna Chandra Dey* rehearsed with *Ustad Badal Khan Saheb*. On a fateful afternoon, *Ustadji* heard the boy imitate a few notes from his *taans* and sent for him – and that's where Manna's journey with music began.



AA MUMBAI CHE

KC Dey's influence had nudged Manna Dey into the direction of music forever. At 23, he took him to Mumbai in order to explain how a singer must weave his emotions into a song to breathe life into the lyrics. In the city of dreams, Manna trained under the legendary **S D Burman** for five years, continuing his training under *Ustad Aman Ali Khan* and *Ustad Abdul Rahman Khan*.

Although with the *Tamanna* OST (1943) Manna had a chance to come into his own (with his duet with *Suraiya*), he was yet to make his presence felt amongst stalwarts like *Rafi* and *Kishore*.

POOCHO NA KAISE MAINE RAIN BITAYE

While it is true that *S D Burman* had Manna sing *Upar Gagan Vishal* (Mashaal, 1950), all he wanted was to revive *K C Dey's* style. Ironically, Manna Dey's proficiency in classical music clipped his wings, for he was pigeonholed as a classical singer. Manna was always the first choice for *bhajans* or songs like *Kaun Aya Mere Man Ke Dware* (Dekh Kabira Roya, 1957) – songs that were based on *ragas* and immensely difficult to render.

As if this typecasting wasn't enough, Manna's voice remained restricted to older characters in films rather than younger heroes like *Raj Kapoor* or *Dilip Kumar*. Even as he broke out of the mould, he only sang for secondary heroes like *Balraj Sahni*, *Pran* and *Mehmood*.

Pained as he was, Manna graciously accepted whatever came his way and continued training rigorously, extending the range of his voice. With a lot of hard work and a little luck, the tides eventually began turning.

CHUTTI KAR DOONGA MAI USKO, ABKE JO AWAAZ LAGAYI

In his autobiography *Memories Come Alive*, Manna Dey credits his success to the unmatched duo, *Shankar and Jaikishen*.

His career took flight with *Raj Kapoor's* *Awaara* (1951), followed by unforgettable compositions like *Lapak Jhapak* (Boot Polish, 1954), *Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala* (Shri 420, 1955) and *Ye Raat Bheegi Bheegi* (Chori Chori, 1956). After a spate of hits, he began receiving a slew of offers to sing for *Dev Anand*, *Shammi Kapoor*, *Rajesh Khanna* and others.

Manna's ease of versatility had reached a zenith. From romantic duets like *Aaja Sanam* (Chori Chori) to the heart-breaking *Poocho Na Kaise Maine* (Meri Soorat Teri Aankhein, 1963) Manna Dey could do it all. Finally, he had arrived.

TU PYAAR KA SAAGAR HAI...

A soul ruled by compassion and a persona defined by simplicity – these are the values that have endeared him to one and all. His wife *Sulochana Dey* once said, "He sings with his heart," which is possibly why *Rafi* once admitted listening only to Manna Dey's songs.

Manna's humility becomes apparent in his unabashed praise of his contemporaries such as *Rafi* and *Kishore* "Their voices are God's gift, mine is a result of training."

In the attempt to know more about him, one also understands why there can be no one else like him. Wish you a very happy birthday Manna Dey! We hope you have many more to come.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Manna Dey's voice may have been trained, but for his fans, it's nothing less than a gift from God. As a tribute to this voice, here are a few of his best renditions

The pain and yearning in Manna Dey's voice are unmistakable, amplified by the lyrics that haunt you long after you've listened to it.

Ae Mere Pyare Watan
Kabuliwala,
1961:

Ae Meri Zohra Jabeen
Waqt,
1965:

Manna lends oodles of charm with a dash of panache to the wonderfully romantic words. One can't help but imagine that he must have pictured his wife *Sulochana* while singing it!

This song was chosen simply because it showcases his versatility. A melodious rock and roll number in which Manna injects his fun-loving spirit to give us a delightful song that is sure to get you jiggling!

Aao Twist Karein
Bohot Bungla,
1965

Tu Pyaar Ka Sagar Hai
Seema,
1955:

A little melancholic, a bit hopeful and complete surrender to the Almighty. After recording the song, *Balraj Sahni* hugged Manna and said, "You lived that role as you sang the song!"

Only a singer of his calibre could butt heads with *Kishore Kumar*. For sheer talent and the fact that this song will last forever in the minds of music aficionados, it has made this list.

Ek Chatur Naa,
Padosan,
1968