
An ode to Salil Chowdhury

- Sujata Chowdhury

The musical genius of Salil Chowdhury or “Salilda” as popularly known, needs no introduction.

A combination of composer, lyricist, musician and an occasional singer, Salilda ruled the world of Indian Music for almost 40 years. Very few music lovers are there in India who are not fans of Salilda. The biggest characteristic of Salilda’s music was that, unlike his contemporaries, his lyrics not only spoke of romance and beauty of life but more of stark reality and broken dreams.

This article is not an analysis of Salilda and his music which I am not at all qualified to do and has been done umpteenth time in various places. It is more of a personal interpretation, experience and influence of his songs on the life of one of his ardent fan and admirer.

My generation was not even there when Salilda started his career. My earliest recollections of Salil Chowdhury’s songs were those sung by his daughter Antara Chowdhury and composed by him. Antara’s album of ‘Bulbul pakhi moyna tia’ and songs of a less known Hindi movie “Minoo”

became our hot favourites. Little did I know what more was there. My first step to Salilda’s world of music was through the album “Abak Prithibi” sung by Sri Hemanta Mukherjee. Those unforgettable melodies and lyrics created for me the unknown magical village life, which we city bred never had the opportunity to experience. Particularly “Dhitang dhitang Boley” became our favourite dance number for any occasion.

Then came the college days when Salilda’s Hindi and Bengali romantic melodies became a part of our musical journey. Salilda’s songs became a tool of our emotional manifestations. Salilda’s songs taught us to see romance in life. My particular favourite was “Madhumati” and bilingual ones sung by Lata Mangeskar.

I have discussed Salilda’s songs with our previous generation, contemporary and next generation. We differ on a number of issues but there is one point where we all agree, the time-less magic that was Salil Chowdhury. Salilda is no longer in this world but wherever he is, he still lives and will continue to live in the hearts of millions of music lovers across generations. □

