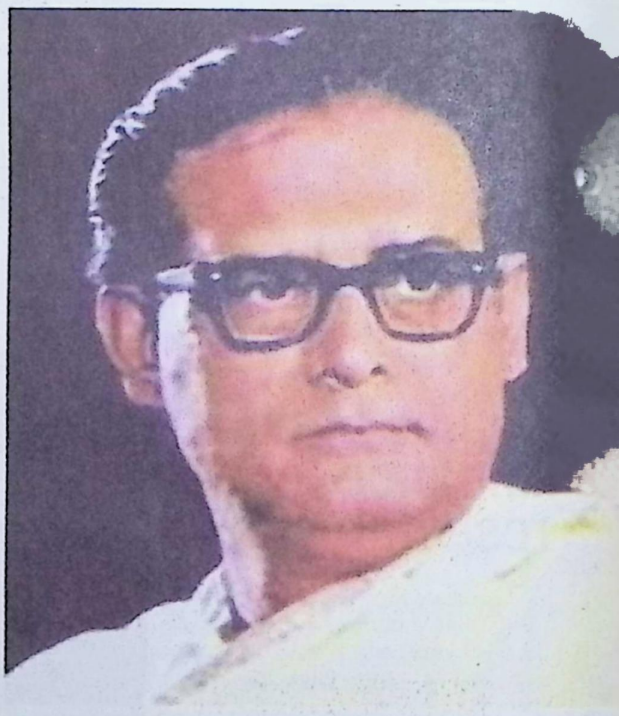
Remembering the Songbird

Hemanta Kumar Mukherjee is one of the most renowned singers and composers of the sub-continent. Many of his songs in Bengali and Hindi have conquered the heart of the music lovers around the world. Apart from hundreds of his evergreen playbacks, he is one the most heard singers of Tagore songs. He was also a renowned film producer. We remember this great personality on his 25th death anniversary.

- Hemanta was born in the city of Varanasi on June 16, 1920
- He grew up in Calcutta and studied at Mitra Institution
- Hemanta left engineering school to pursue a career in music despite the objection of his parents and relatives

- Before becoming entirely committed to music, Hemanta wrote several short stories which were published in a prestigious Bengali magazine called Desh
- As suggested by his friend Subhas, Hemanta recorded his first song for All India Radio in 1935
- Hemanta's first playback was in the Bengali film called Nimai Sanyas released in 1941



Hemanta Kumar Mukherjee

- Hemanta launched his first gramophone disc of non-film songs in 1937 and the songs were *Janite Jadi Go Tumi and Balo Go Balo More*
- He first launched his disc of Tagore songs in 1944 which included *Amar Aar Habe Na Deri and Keno Pantha E Chanchalata*
- His first film as a music director was in the Bengali film *Abhiyatri* in 1947

- By the mid-1950s, Hemanta became a prominent singer and composer both in Bengali and Hindi
- He composed music for a Hindi film called *Nagin* (1954) which became a major success owing largely to its music
- In the late 1950s, Hemanta ventured into movie production under his own banner Hemanta-Bela productions (later renamed as Geetanjali Productions)
- The first movie under this banner was a Bengali film directed by Mrinal Sen, titled *Neel Akasher Neechey* (1959) which won the Presidnet's Gold Medal

- Hemanta debuted as a film director in the Bengali movie titled *Anindita* (1971, which he himself had produced
- In 1987, he was nominated for the Padmabhushan which he politely refused, having already turned down the offer to receive the Padmashree in the 1970s
- In September 1989, he travelled to Dhaka to receive the Michael Madhusudan Award and performed in a concert as well
- On September 26, 1989 Hemanta suffered a major heart attack and died in a nursing home in South Calcutta

– MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN