

# Remembering Bengal's queen of melody, SANDHYA MUKHOPADHYAY

“The love of my listeners is my greatest award”.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay to Indian media, two days before she was hospitalised.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Legendary Bengali singer Sandhya Mukhopadhyay passed away at the age of 90 on February 15, following a massive cardiac arrest, leaving behind legions of mourning fans across borders.

She was born and brought up in Kolkata, and took her first singing lessons from her parents Narendranath Mukhopadhyay and Hemaprabha Devi. She was a trained classical singer, who with equal ease took to different forms of singing — from playback to folk songs, Rabindra Sangeet, and bhajans.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay, through a legacy of over 280 songs, took Bengali songs to new heights, whether it was playback singing for films or songs released during Durga Puja.

Her first recording was in 1945 and her first album of Durga Puja songs was released in 1948. Soon, she got offers for playback singing in Bengali films. Her first playback singing was for the film, “Samapika”, released in 1948.

She went on to sing for around 17 Hindi films before returning to Kolkata and settling there as an



Sandhya Mukhopadhyay has left behind a legacy of over 280 songs.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Unfortunately, her recent refusal of the Padma Shri and the controversy that ensued, is probably what made her known to the rest of the world, when she deserved to be an international legend, rather than simply a Bengali icon.

The eminent songstress represented an entire era in Bengal, where love was expressed through songs, and love songs necessarily meant Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay duets. She was clearly aware of her stature, and that is why she had the courage to refuse the award.

Intriguingly, there were rumours that Lata Mangeshkar and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay shared a bitter relationship — and because of the relationship, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay could not establish herself in Bollywood.

However, in her autobiography published in 2001, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay had stated that those rumours were complete lies.

Reportedly, the two singers shared a great bond with each other, and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay chose

to be in Kolkata herself. She sang the duet “Bol papiha bol” with Lata Mangeshkar in the 1951 film, “Taraana”.

Pitting the two singing legends against each other is unnecessary, as noted by celebrated Bollywood playback singer Abhijeet Bhattacharya. “Like Lata Mangeshkar, Sandhya Mukherjee (Mukhopadhyay) was the incarnation of Saraswati. These voids can never be filled,” he told Indian media yesterday.

Although Sandhya Mukhopadhyay’s importance in the world of music can be talked about for days on end, her greater legacy was that of a humble artiste, whose passion for her craft was unparalleled. Her melodies will continue to inspire musicians for generations to come.



The eminent songstress had turned down the Padma Shri.

eminent playback singer in Bengali cinema. Her most significant duets were with Bengali singer Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, especially when she did playback for renowned actress Suchitra Sen.

She worked with leading music directors, including SD Burman,

Madan Mohan, Naushad, Anil Biswas and Salil Chowdhury. Some of her iconic songs are “Ei Poth Jodi Na Shesh Hoy”, “Madhumaloti Dake Aaye”, “E Shudhu Gaaner Din”, “Ghum Ghum Chand”, and “Ke Tumi Aamare Dako”, among many others.

Lovingly called “Gitasree”, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay received the National Film Award for best female playback singer for the films, “Sandhya Deeper Sikha” (1965) and “Jay Jayanti” (1972).

Among countless other accolades, she was conferred West Bengal government’s highest recognition, Banga Bibhushan, in 2011.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay will be remembered by millions for her role in the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

In Kolkata, she was actively involved in creating awareness about the issues of the people of the then East Pakistan. She helped musician Samar Das in setting up the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, which played a

crucial role in relaying Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s message to the people.

Her songs for Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra were crucial in Bangladesh’s Liberation War as they motivated the Mukti Bahini soldiers and also mobilised the masses by

phire elo tomar, swapner swadhin Banglai”, on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

It was a powerful reminder of the

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creating a patriotic fervour.

She joined leading artistes to perform concerts free of fee to raise money for the 10 million refugees who were forced to take shelter in India.

In January 1972, when Bangabandhu returned from prison to a newly independent nation, he was greeted by the song “Bangabandhu

sufferings and sacrifices Bangladeshis underwent during the Liberation War.

Written by Abidur Rahaman and composed by Sudhin Dasgupta, one of the most prolific composers from West Bengal, the song was made memorable by the beautiful voice of Sandhya Mukhopadhyay.

## Farewell to the man who made billions dance

### Bappi Lahiri passes away at 69

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Think of the world’s greatest Disco artistes — Donna Summer had 17 studio albums, while Gloria Gaynor had 18.

In 1986 alone, Bappi Lahiri recorded 180 songs for 33 albums, entering the Guinness Book of World Records.

The man responsible for bringing the iconic sound of disco to the subcontinent passed away on Tuesday night at 11:45 pm, at a hospital in Mumbai. He was 69 years old at the time of passing, and had had been ailing for many weeks, suffering from obstructive sleep apnea.

“Shri Bappi Lahiri Ji’s music was all encompassing, beautifully expressing diverse emotions. People across generations could relate to his works,” wrote India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Twitter. “His lively nature will be missed by everyone.”

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also prayed for the salvation of the departed soul, in her condolence message.

When you think of Bappi Lahiri, chances are that you think of his unusual demeanour — a musical legend who modelled himself after the outlandish pop culture of the 80s, adorning gold chains and a striking choice of clothing and apparels. To those close to him, however, his heart of gold far outshined his exterior glitz.

Bappi Lahiri was born as Alokesh Lahiri on November 27, 1952, to father Aparesh Lahiri and mother Bansuri Lahiri. His father, who was also a well-known music director, and his maternal uncle, the legendary Kishore Kumar, inspired him to pursue music.

From the age of 3, Bappi Lahiri started playing the tabla, eventually picking up many eastern classical instruments.

When he finally entered the music industry in the early 70’s he had to compete with the juggernauts of the industry, including the likes

of Laxmikant-Pyarelal and R D Burman.

‘Bappi da’, as he was endearingly known, attributes his first success to the ‘Saraswati’ of Indian music, Lata Mangeshkar. Lata had previously worked with his father in some projects. “She sang my first composition in a Bengali film, ‘Daadu’. If she hadn’t sung for me, I’d have been swept away by the competition”, Lahiri had said in multiple interviews.

The music director had found success in films like “Zakhmee” (1975), “Chalte Chalte” (1976), and “Suraksha” (1979). However, his breakout success came in 1982’ blockbuster “Disco Dancer”, which sent an entire subcontinent into frenzy over his disco tracks like “I am a Disco Dancer”, “Jimmy Jimmy Aaja Aaje” and “Koi Yahaan Nache Nache” were chartbusters, turning Bappi Lahiri into one of the most sought-after music directors of the 80’s.

Throughout the years, Lahiri sang in many languages, often reinventing his style of music without straying too far from his signature, flamboyant style.

He often infused tunes from folk songs and made modern renditions, as evident in songs like “Yaar Bina Chain Kaha Re”, which was inspired from “She Jon Shona Chine Na”.

Besides his illustrious film career, Bappi Lahiri also collaborated with international icons like Samantha Fox, Boy George, Snoop Dogg, MC Hammer and Akon,

among others. “Raat Baaqi”, “Chirodini Tumi Je Amar”, “Bambai Se Aaya Mera Dost”, “Oo Laa Laa”, “Chalte Chalte Meri Yeh Geet Yaad Rakhna”, “Yaad Aa Raha Hain” are only a few of his notable songs, among hundreds of super-hits.

Bappi Lahiri is survived by his wife Chitrani Lahiri, son Bappa Lahiri, and his daughter Rema Lahiri.

His passing is not only the end of an era, but an entire genre in India — as no one could truly recreate his Disco ‘magic’ in Bollywood. However, following the maestro’s own lines “Chalte Chalte Meri Ye Geet Yaad Rakhna”, we shall never truly say goodbye to him — he is omnipresent every time we listen to his groovy masterpieces.



⌚ Bappi Lahiri was born as Alokesh Lahiri in 1952.

⌚ He started playing the tabla from the age of 3.

⌚ In 1986 alone, Bappi Lahiri recorded 180 songs for 33 albums, entering the Guinness Book of World Records.

⌚ Kishore Kumar was his maternal uncle. The duo later recorded 200 songs together.

⌚ Bappi Lahiri sued the US band Truth Hurts in 2002 for lifting riff from his song ‘Kaliyon Ka Chaman’. He won credit in an LA court.

⌚ He once stated that he wanted Ranveer Singh to portray him in a biopic

⌚ 2006 was the first time he sang for another composer, in film “Taki No 9211”.

⌚ In a season of Indian Idol, he revealed that Elvis Presley was his styling information.



Bappi Lahiri (middle) with Lata Mangeshkar and Kishore Kumar.

A young Bappi Lahiri with Lata Mangeshkar.

Bappi Lahiri and Mithun Chakraborty revolutionised the Indian film industry with “Disco Dancer”.