

Lataji's work is beyond awesome: Javed Akhtar

As India's melody queen Lata Mangeshkar enters her 80th year Sunday, noted writer and poet Javed Akhtar says that she is the only artiste to have achieved perfection and that her body of work is 'beyond awesome'.

'Normally artistes strive for perfection. Only Lata Mangeshkar has achieved it. There are no boundaries to her excellence and reach,' Akhtar told IANS.

The lyricist said that people remember Lata's songs more than the films they were in.

'You know Hindi film music is so deeply rooted to our life and culture... When I go to foreign countries and to exclusive gatherings of NRIs who are deeply conscious of their status and position, they invariably lose their inhibitions once everyone starts singing songs,' he said.

'More than cinema, I think Indians all over the world are bonded by film songs. Film music outlives cinema. Today we remember Lataji's songs. But not the films they belong to.'

Born on Sep 28, 1929, Lata started her music career at the age of 13 with a Marathi film. Having worked with almost all top music composers and singers in the industry, Lata has sung more than 30,000 songs in over 20 Indian languages. The singer featured in the Guinness Book of World Records from 1974 to 1991 for having made the most recordings in the world.

From her first super hit 'Aayega aanewaala' to her recent bests like 'Luka chuppi', Lata has endeared herself to music lovers of every generation with her soulful singing over her 66-year-long career.

'No matter how much we revere Lataji, we cannot even begin to evaluate her contribution to Indian cinema and ethos. Her body of work is beyond awesome. Listen to the nostalgia channel on Wordspace Music. Eighty percent of the songs are by Lataji. She has proved perfection is possible in this imperfect world,' said Akhtar.

'Sometimes I think people like Lataji, Ghalib, Beethoven and Shakespeare are far removed from the normal chain of human civilization. If they were just role models, how come no one was able to achieve an iota of their perfection? They come as reminders of the rule of mediocrity that prevails. Lataji belongs to a different league,' he added.

Akhtar went to give anecdotes of how even musical greats like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan could,'t stop praising the singer.

'I'll tell you an incident that Pandit Jasraj narrated to me from the 1950s. He was in Amritsar when he met the classical genius, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. After Pandit Jasraj got talking, Bade Ghulam Ali Saab suddenly told him to keep quiet. He heard the sound of the young Lata Mangeshkar singing 'Yeh zindagi ussiki ki hai' from 'Anarkali'. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan was enraptured. He finally said, 'Kambhakt, kabhi besuri hoti hi nahin' (She never goes out of tune).'

'That remark had the affection of a father and the envy of an artiste,' Akhtar remarked.

He gave yet another example of people appreciating her perfection.

'I remember meeting a music scholar, Chaman Bharti, in Bhopal. I asked him what he found so special about Lata Mangeshkar. He explained, 'If you take a strand of hair and put it under a microscope, there would be a centre to that magnified view of the strand of hair. Sur kitna bhi bareeq ho, usska jo exact centre hai wahan Lata Mangeshkar gaati hai'. (However fine the tune is, she always sings it perfectly).

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