

# Blend of Bright & Dark Shades in the Life of The Artists (With Special Reference to Jagjit Singh)



**Roshan Bharti**

Lecturer,  
Dept. of Music Vocal,  
JDB Govt. Girls College,  
Kota, Rajasthan, India

## Abstract

Every artist is the creation of his own circumstances that lead him to the becoming of an artist. The history of each and every artist, with the exception of very few, reveals unending struggles in their life resulting the artist's inclination to some art. Jagjit Singh too, is not an exception to it. Behind the silken voice of Jagjit Singh there lies his emotions caused by the struggles that he met and that forced him to link himself up with music in order to forget the past and to keep himself away momentarily from the haunting past.

Jagjit Singh's passion for music and for uncommon achievements brought him closer to the singing of ghazals, and enabled him to rule over the hearts of the people touching and piercing their hearts as the ghazal samrat. His ghazals bear his heart in them, and are capable of reaching the hearts of the people, as they are found to be soothing, melodious and full of life having the vibrant colours of life in them.

Jagjit Singh's life as a ghazal singer is quite notable for the struggles that were encountered by him right from the point of time he made music his career to the point of time he breathed his last. There were moments that boosted him up, and there the moments that broke him utterly to the core, but he posed himself as an artist whose chief concern is to please and delight the audience and people at large. The blend of bright and dark shades of Jagjit's life made him an artist, and it is this singularity that makes him the favourite ghazal singer of millions and billions of the people across the world.

The paper is an attempt to draw a biographical sketch of the world-famous ghazal samrat Jagjit Singh, highlighting the moments of struggle in his life.

**Keywords:** Bright, Dark, Colours, Ghazals, Classical, Moods, Silken Voice, Samrat.

## Introduction

Born as a Sikh in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, Jagjit came to be known for his universality that knows no religion or nationality. His journey from Jagmohan to Jagjit Singh, the ghazal samrat, was full of ups and downs. The soil and cultural environment of Rajasthan nurtured him to be a universal artist and musician. His life in Sri Ganganagar and Bikaner during his childhood, boyhood and adolescence was the life of a common boy. However, while still in Sri Ganganagar, his singing talent was identified and refined by a blind teacher named Pandit Chhagan Lal Sharma, and later by Ustad Jamal Khan of Senia Gharana who sowed the seeds of music in him through their teachings.

Beginning with the singing of Sikh hymns sung on religious ceremonies in gurudwaras, he shared the stage for the first time when he was in IX standard. It led him further to the sharing of several stages not only in India, but all over the world and getting and winning applause. His first impression as a singer in Sri Ganganagar College before 4000 audience remained his last impression before thousands of the people till he died.

His college education at DAV College Jalandhar added much to his enthusiasm because there he got opportunities to join All India Radio as a B grade artist with the recording of six live music segments every year. The moment in 1962 when he was selected to compose a song for the President Rajendra Prasad, was the golden moment in his life. It was something that revealed his promising prospects.

His passion and love for music and for playback singing carried him to Mumbai in the early 1960s. His meeting with Jaikishan in Mumbai brought rays of hope, but due to paucity of funds and money, he had to come back to Jalandhar. His insatiable lust for playback singing again carried him to Mumbai bringing him success in making two ghazals with HMV. His picture without a Sikh turban on the cover of the record brought forth his realization that a true artist lives over the boundaries of religion and nativity, and that he is for the whole universe. It was something that reflected broad outlook and broad mentality.

His beginning in Mumbai forced him to undergo and face several unknown challenges and difficulties due to lack of money. In order to meet out his expenses and earn living, he allowed himself to sing in festivals, home concerts, film parties etc.

The contemporary playback singing scenario in Mumbai did not suit to Jagjit's tastes as he was interested more in ghazals than in other types of songs. The thought that his dream of playback singing in Bollywood might remain unfulfilled caused him frustrations. However, he did not lose hope, and began to compose music for advertising films, radio jingles, documentaries, etc.

Chitra Singh's entry in Jagjit Singh's life in Mumbai during his struggles filled his life with new hopes and new colours. Both married each other in December 1969, and from this turning point, Jagjit Singh kept on moving towards the higher and higher horizons of success and achievement. The period from 1965 to 1973 brought Jagjit Singh settlement in Mumbai as a ghazal singer. During this period, there came 3 single EPs to his own account, while 2 EPs with duet pictures to the account of the couple. Obviously, it was something that brought establishment in the staggering and struggling career of Jagjit Singh.

The year 1971 blessed him with his son Vivek, and the moment of his birth made him feel as if he were the richest man in the world. The year 1975 when HMV released Jagjit Singh's first LP album bringing him an unexpected success and achievement boosted him to continue his journey as a ghazal singer. The release of the album Unforgettables was something unbelievable, as it made the couple popular at the national level and enabled them to buy a modest flat in Mumbai.

The movies Saath Saath and Arth with the ghazals of Jagjit Singh opened new gates of success in Bollywood. These two Hindi films made the couple very popular. The recording of India's first purely digital CD album entitled Beyond Time, allowed him to cross the next milestone of success.

The year 1990 caused an unbearable shock to the Singh family when a motor accident took the life of their only son, and left Jagjit and Chitra Singh in a helpless state that could not be compensated in terms of the whole money of the world. Chitra Singh's decision of never to sing again and Jagjit's long-lasting depression reveal it. However, music helped him recover and be goal-oriented seeking his son

through the ghazals that were sung later after this tragedy.

The incident turned him to spiritualism and Sikhism, and so seeking spiritual peace through his debut album Man Jeete Jagjit, he voiced the gurbani in it. His album Sajda with Lata Mangeshkar which broke all non-film records in 1991, is sufficient to confirm his height in the world of music and ghazal. It is notable that later Kumar Sanu was given a break by Jagjit Singh. October 10, 2011 took away this singing icon from his fans for ever. However, through his ghazals and other musical compositions, he will always be there to rule over their hearts. In his life, Jagjit Singh won several awards, some of which are enlisted hereunder-

1. 1998- Lata Mangeshkar Award by the Government of Madhya Pradesh
2. 1998- Sahitya Kala Academy Award by the Government of Rajasthan
3. 1998-Sahitya Akademi Award by the Government of India for popularizing the work of Mirza Ghalib.
4. 2003-Padma Bhushan
5. 2012, Rajasthan Ratna (Posthumously)

#### Review of Literature

Mehadi I.M. (1975), in the article entitled Development of the Urdu Ghazal, shares that the Urdu ghazal came into its own at a time when Mughal rule was entering the final phase of decline. Meer and Ghalib represented the consummation of the humanistic tradition in Urdu poetry. After that Iqbal started from where Ghalib had left. Iqbal introduced modern sensibility in Urdu poetry. Hasrat, Fani, Jigar, Yazana and others made a rich contribution to the treasure store of ghazal, but the creative development of the legacy left by Ghalib and Iqbal in the field of ghazal fell to the lot of the modern poets like Firaq, Faiz, Majaz, Majrooh, Makhdoom, Jan Nisar, Kalfi etc.

Yojana Sharma (Jan 27 1998), under the title POETRY: India's 'Ghazal' King Sparks Revival of Ancient Poetry, writes that Jagjit Singh is a prolific and talented singer-composer who, together with his wife Chitra Singh, put many of the old ghazals – hauntingly romantic Persian or Urdu poems often dating back to the 16th century – to unforgettable music. Since 1976, the couple has recorded some 40 albums. Jagjit Singh has another 12 solo albums to his name, all of them megahits within India. The Singhs also have a considerable following outside India, including Britain and the United States, where Indian immigrants have introduced their non-Indian friends to the ghazal arts of the Singhs and converted them. Jagjit Singh is the new Ravi Shanker as far as introducing Indian music to western audiences goes. Jagjit Singh has a very distinctive style of great depth, he brings out the real romance in the lyrics through the music,

Rasheeda Bhagat (October 10, 2011), in A tribute to Jagjit Singh- Indian Ghazal loses its king, pays tribute to him saying that the Indian Ghazal, if there is such an entity because music recognises no boundaries, has certainly lost its golden voice... a voice that was as smooth as silk, as comforting and soothing as capable of reaching down deep within your soul and unlocking moments and memories, love, pain, laughter, passion and emotions one

thought belonged to the past. Jagjit's rendition of the Ghazal, or Urdu poetry, was effortless, and he tugged at your heart strings while singing the song of love. With his mellifluous voice, he sang ghazals such as Sarakti jayen hei rukh se nakab ahista ahista, Mil kar juda huey toh na soya karengay hum, Tere khushboo mei basey khat mai jalata kaisey, Apney haathon ki lakeero mei basa dey mujh ko, with a consummate ease and effortlessness that was mindblowing.

He was at his most melodious and intense while rendering Qateel Shifai's ghazals such as Kiya hei pyar jissey humney zindagi ki tarah or Apney haatho ki lakeero se. He could bring out the romance, the longing, the desperation, the pathos, the passion, the rejection and dejection of the lover that Shifai captured so magically in his Urdu poetry. Kagaz ki kashti, sung along with wife Chitra Singh, was perhaps Jagjit's most popular ghazal, but his repertoire of the song of love was so vast and sweeping that it is difficult to zero down on the most favourite.

Sandip Roy (February 8, 2013), in The guilty pleasure of Jagjit Singh, India's Ghazal king, writes that every Indian of a certain age probably has a Jagjit Singh album stashed away somewhere. Other singers gave us songs. But Jagjit Singh gave us the Jagjit Singh sound. Make that the Jagjit Singh experience – silken, soothing, heartfelt, almost evergreen. He was the great survivor. It seemed like he could croon *Patta Patta Boota Boota* forever. And the rest of us could hum along and pretend that time was not passing us by. He was a sort of elixir in an audio-cassette, a bit of a guilty pleasure. For many of us, growing up far away from the decaying splendour of Lucknow, Urdu poetry was a rarefied art form to be admired but not absorbed. We just didn't understand enough, we watched the *waah-waahs* from afar and felt too intimidated to even admit how little we understood.

Moeena Halim (September 30, 2015), under the title Tune into new ghazals, reports that at a time when ghazal is witnessing a somewhat diminished patronage, artistes such as Pathak, Agarwal and Akhtar are trying their best to make it more palatable to the younger audience. Something Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh managed to do in the 1970s, when the ghazal was almost on the brink of extinction. Following in his guru Jagjit Singh's footsteps, Akhtar, who launched his solo album *Ishq Karo* in August, continues to experiment with a new sound for ghazals, basing his music on western harmony.

#### Objectives of The Study

1. To develop an understanding of the making of an artist
2. To reflect the impact of the family and cultural environment on the artist
3. To trace and reflect the role of secondary imagination in making the artist creative
4. To concentrate on music and ghazal as a trend of singing
5. To draw a comprehensive biographical sketch of Jagjit Singh
6. To portray Jagjit Singh's childhood, boyhood, adolescence and youth

7. To mirror Jagjit Singh's marital life with Chitra Singh
8. To trace forth the ups and downs in Jagjit Singh's life
9. To reflect the various achievements made by Jagjit Singh
10. To interpret Jagjit Singh's status as a Ghazal Samrat

#### Hypothesis

1. Several factors contribute to the making of an artist
2. Family and cultural environment of the locality and community which the artist belongs to, has a deep impact on his personality, nature and temperament
3. All the musical creations are the result and outcome of the secondary imagination
4. The Indian music is characterized by its varied trends
5. Jagjit Singh is an immortal figure in the history of the Indian music
6. His biography is an authentic source of learning about the various phases of his life
7. The genius of the artists is identified quite early when they are in childhood, adolescence etc.
8. Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh had a great bonding between them
9. Jagjit Singh's life was full of ups and downs and full of the varied light and dark shades of life
10. Hardwork of the artists pay in the form of achievements and popularity
11. Jagjit Singh's status as an Indian Ghazal Samrat is so immense
12. Jagjit Singh's universality is the specific feature of his singing.

#### Methodology

Designed as per the norms set for a comprehensive and descriptive research, the paper observes scientific method and all its steps. The reports published in the various reputed newspapers, magazines and journals, and the published studies supplied the secondary data that was compiled, classified, interpreted and generalized as per the requirement for the study. For the purpose of the study, only secondary data was used, and no primary data was collected. The objectivity is maintained throughout the study without changing any fact as shown and displayed in the reports or studies selected through net surfing on the theme. Throughout, the concern is to reflect the glimpses from the personal, marital and professional life of the Indian ghazal samrat Jagjit Singh.

#### Findings

1. In the making of an artist belonging to any field, the family, company, cultural environment, own passion play a vital role leading him to the concerning field
2. The temperament, mood and devotion of the artists reflects his inner personality that is influenced by all the specified factors
3. Primary imagination is found in all, while the secondary imagination is gifted only to the artists, and all the artistic creations are the product of the secondary imagination

4. Music has its own trends. Ghazal is one of the most popular trends of singing in India which allows both the singer and the audience to make self-introspection
5. In India, there are several ghazal singers, but Jagjit Singh is an immortal figure in the history of ghazal-singing whose ghazals are sung and heard by most of the music lovers
6. Jagjit Singh's biographical sketched produced by the scholars and reporters from time to time, confirm that Jagjit Singh's life was not a bed of roses, rather it was full of thorns that came to him in the form of poverty, financial crisis, failures, frustrations, tragedies etc.
7. Quite early in life, Jagjit Singh's singing talent and his passion for classical music was identified by his mentor and family members
8. Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh, though often taken as two opposite poles from several angles, form a lovable couple who ruled over the hearts of the people for a long time through their heart-felt ghazals
9. The light and dark shades in the life and career of Jagjit Singh make one realize his sense of taking things as challenge

10. Jagjit Singh's hard work and his passion for music and ghazals paid him in the form of several national and international awards for his unmatched genius
11. The specific feature of Jagjit Singh's ghazals is universality that he maintains through his looks and contents of his ghazals
12. Jagjit Singh enjoys an envied status as a ghazal singer, and he will be there through his ghazals and bhajans in the hearts of the audience of the next generations to come.

#### References

1. *I. M. Mehadi- Development of the Urdu Ghazal, Indian Culture, 1975*
2. *Rasheeda Bhagat - A tribute to Jagjit Singh — Indian Ghazal loses its king, BusinessLine, Variety, October 10, 2011*
3. *Sandip Roy-The guilty pleasure of Jagjit Singh, India's Ghazal king, First Post, Feb. 8, 2013*
4. *Yojana Sharma- POETRY: India's 'Ghazal' King Sparks Revival of Ancient Poetry, Inter Press Service News Agency, Jan 27 1998*
5. *Moeena Halim-Tune into new ghazals, India Today, September 30, 2015*