

Abhay Sopori compose Mahatma

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Versatile is one word that describes **Abhay Rustum Sopori**, for he has immersed as one of the sensational names in the music world as a Santoor Maestro and Music Composer. For his excellence in music he has been honoured with the prestigious Sangeet Natak Academy Award (Ust. Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar 2007) becoming the 1st and the youngest recipient to be honoured with this award. Abhay has been the youngest classical musician to compose and conduct orchestras and folk ensembles. He is the son of the great Santoor legend and music composer **Pandit Bhajan Sopori** who is hailed as the 'Saint of Santoor' and the 'King of Strings'. Abhay is the torch bearer of this exclusive traditional Santoor family of the country - the *Sufiana Gharana* of Kashmir with its roots of Santoor playing of more than 250 years.

.....: A discussion with Abhay Rustum Sopori on the film

The film 'Mahatma' focuses on what made Gandhiji the Mahatma. The film goes through his life in India and abroad and depicts how various incidents in Gandhi's life shaped him to immerge as a great soul who gave the world a mantra for life - peace, love and non-violence. The director of the film G. S. Raina has developed a powerful story line with archival video work describing various shades of the life of Gandhi. In fact some of there video images which would be seen for the first time by the viewers.

Composing music for a dynamic subject like Mahatma is in itself an exciting and wonderful experience. Essentially, such type of compositional work need to communicate musically the variegated thoughts of the legend shown. It may be a communication of a Ram Bhajan or a subject like 'Vaishnav Janto', yet these are to be seen from various angles keeping in view the traditions and the modern perspective. Since there are various new sequences in the film which vary from his tour abroad on a ship, meeting various people abroad, and interacting with children and the youth, as such the music is not merely a score but a communication of these thoughts.

One of the scenes in the film shows the violence and destruction around the globe. I have musically developed this sequence of brutality of killings and death by some new musical sounds and tones which are new to the music world. This also features various new shades of 'Vaishnav Janto' and the popular Ram Bhajan since music associated with Gandhiji and his ashrams is in itself a musical genre.

My approach to this film has been an adoption of Mahatma as a youth and reproducing him

musically. I have not seen Mahatma personally but seeing him in this film I could visualize the dynamism of his personality which made him the greatest in this world. Mahatma's thoughts are a philosophy of life which I have tried to communicate through my music.

I am thankful to Doordarshan for giving me this opportunity to compose music for this prestigious film 'Mahatma' together with the legend Pandit Bhajan Sopori, as a tribute to 'Bapu'.

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