

An evening of ghazals at India House

It is the first Azaan on the first evening of the holy month of Ramadan. Time to end the Roza and begin Iftar. At India House, the evening was made special by the soulful notes of ghazals. A select audience, which included Afghan First Vice President Zia Masoud, several ministers, senior officials, members of the diplomatic corps, enjoyed each rendition by India's renowned ghazal singer Satish Babbar.

Babbar hails from the Parmar Gharana of Himachal Pradesh in India and has performed extensively in India and abroad over the last 35 years. He has also acted in and rendered music for several films and TV serials. Satish Babbar is the recipient of several musical awards, including the Best Ghazal Singer Award in the World Ghazal Festival in Malaysia (1996), the National Award (1994) and the Man of Art and Culture Award (1985).

The mellifluous voice of Babbar transported the audience into a different era and mood. Accompanied by his daughter Vani Babbar as the second lead, Babbar started with Tarana in Raag Hameer and Naat-e-Pak of the famous poet Amir Khusro.

The next rendition in Raag Baageswari mesmerised the audience and kept them in thrall even after the concert. Bedil's composition Hama Umr ba to Qadeh, ghazals by Rumi, Qudsi, Bulle Shah and Ghalib left the audience spellbound. Some of the music cognoscenti recalled the times when Kabul used to be the cultural hub of this part of Asia.

"It reminded me of my childhood," said Fauzia Asifi, a consultant working for the Afghan government. "There were days when Begum Akhtar and Ghulam Ali sang in our house till dawn. Today's evening brought me back those memories," she told Babbar.

Babbar and his troupe were touched by the passionate response from the audience.

On his first visit to Kabul, a visibly thrilled Babbar said: "The audience response is tremendous and we enjoyed so much this evening. Afghanistan and the people of Kabul are the real hosts of this event. My troupe and I are taking back great memories of this evening."

The open-air music concert concluded with a post-Iftar dinner hosted by Ambassador Sood. ■



First Vice President of Afghanistan Ahmad Zia Masoud congratulates ghazal singer Satish Babbar.



From right: First Vice President of Afghanistan Zia Masoud, former foreign minister of Afghanistan Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Director General of ICCR Pavan Varma, his wife Renuka Varma, Vice-President of ICCR Dr. Syed Shahid Mahdi.