

The enduring legacy of USTAD ZAKIR HUSSAIN

Legendary classical music maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain, a towering figure in Indian classical music, has passed away at the age of 73. The world has lost a genius, a man whose rhythmic magic transcended borders, cultures, and genres, uniting audiences globally. As the eldest son of another tabla legend, Ustad Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain carried forward a legacy that made him a bridge between traditional Indian classical music and the modern global stage.



ZAKIR HUSSAIN QUOTES

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DOWEL BISWAS

In a career that spanned over six decades, Zakir Hussain worked with not just India's musical stalwarts like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, but also legends like George Harrison and Van Morrison. His presence at George Harrison's historic *Concert for Bangladesh* in 1971, alongside his father Ustad Alla Rakha, was a pivotal moment. “It was an impossible feat, but it had to be done. It was crucial to get the message of Bangladesh out to the world,” he once recalled, speaking of how music became a vehicle for global solidarity.

“Through the collective power of music from artistes all around the world, something unimaginable happened. I was there, I saw it all with my own eyes. George Harrison didn't just stop at organising the concert; he made sure each artiste donated money as well. I remember watching him hold the donation box while Bob Dylan wrote out a check and dropped it in. The compassion, love, and enthusiasm for the people of Bangladesh, for whom the concert was held, were evident in every artiste. It was an indescribable experience,” Zakir recalled his ties with Bangladesh in a past interview during one of his many visits to the country.

“I am not a torchbearer of Indian classical music,” he once said, reflecting the humility that defined him despite his monumental stature in the world of rhythm. For him, music wasn't about claiming titles or fame. “Each instrument has a spirit that can guide you to say what they want to say. So that's what we are discovering with tabla,” he explained. Zakir Hussain treated the tabla as more than just a percussion instrument—it was a living, breathing voice.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

I still remember my first encounter with his genius. It was the brutal winter of 2015, and I, then a naive first year university student, found myself at the *Bengal Classical Music Festival* in Dhaka. The atmosphere was frozen,

but the audience, including me, was captivated by a lineup of subcontinental classical giants. Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan—these names were familiar yet distant to someone

unversed in the intricacies of classical music. But the moment Ustad Zakir Hussain took the stage, the icy stillness melted. His fingers danced across the tabla with such grace and fire that the cold night felt far away. His music weaved warmth into the air, leaving the audience breathless, enchanted.

I felt a divine connection, something intangible but powerful, as if I had been drawn into the very heart of the music. The purity of his sound transcended comprehension, echoing through the night. Each beat of his tabla was both a whisper and a roar, a flicker of rain and fire. It was the kind of magic people often associate with the mythical Tansen—the ability to summon the elements through sound.

When it came to living up to his father's legacy, Zakir was disarmingly honest. “I never wanted to fit in *Abbaji's* shoes and am happy to walk in my own,” he often remarked, appreciating the immense gift of music passed down to him while insisting on carving out his own path.

Hussain's humility was perhaps his most endearing trait. Zakir never allowed his fame to overshadow his music. “Don't worry about being a great master or guru, just try to be a great student. As long as you are a great student, the well of knowledge will not dry up,” he would say, always reminding those around him of the importance of continuous learning.

Hussain often shared a personal childhood memory, one that perfectly encapsulated his bond with his father and music. “The tradition is the father is supposed to recite a prayer in the baby's ear, welcoming the baby. My father didn't give *Aazan* but started playing tabla near my ear. Everybody wondered what my father was doing? He said that that *Aazan* was only this. I am a devotee of Saraswati and therefore this is my prayer.” That image of the tabla replacing a prayer stuck with him—and perhaps, it defined how deeply spiritual and rooted his connection to the instrument was.

Despite his global fame, Zakir Hussain's presence was serene, always smiling, always grateful for the opportunity to perform. “Music is an infinite ocean and I am just a humble sailor,” he would say, shrugging off the endless accolades that came his way. He was, after all, not just a musician but a statesman of rhythm, one who respected the art of accompaniment and believed in elevating his fellow musicians rather than seeking the spotlight for himself. “The tabla is not just an instrument; it is my mate, my brother, my friend, and my spirit,” the maestro once said.

His influence went beyond the stage. He composed for films, including Ismail Merchant's *Heat and Dust* and the Cannes-acclaimed Malayalam film *Vanaprastham*, in which he also acted. His multifaceted talent extended to every corner of the musical world, from composing to performing, and even to acting—an embodiment of artistic fluidity.

Today, as we bid farewell to this maestro, we remember not just the artiste but the person—a man whose every beat resonated with humanity's most profound emotions.

COUNTRYWIDE

RANGPUR REGION

Orange, malta farming on the rise

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Cultivation of malta and oranges is gradually gaining popularities among farmers in Rangamati region as a growing number of them are seeing profits from the two fruits.

Many farmers in five districts — Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Nilphamari — under Rangpur region have been successfully cultivating oranges and malta for the last six to seven years.

While talking a number of buyers and sellers said the orange and malta produced in the region are smaller in sizes, but it taste really sweet and almost similar to the imported ones.

Not only farmers are benefiting from commercial cultivation of oranges and malta, consumers are also buying those as the locally grown fruits are being sold at a cheaper prices at different fruit markets.

According to Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials, there are about 1,40,000 malta and orange trees at 125 orchards, raised on about 450 acres of land, in different upazilas under five districts of Rangpur region.

Each tree produces about 40kg of different varieties of the fruits that include China, Darjeeling and Darjeeling

Nagpuri varieties.

Enamul Haque of Haribhanga area in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said he planted 2,800 malta and orange trees on eight acres of land couple of year ago and has been harvesting fruits from those trees for the last five years.

He is selling oranges and malta to the fruit sellers directly from his orchard at Tk 90 to Tk 100 per kg.

Farmar Mansur Ali of Koimari village in Nilphamari's Dimla upazila said he has been commercially producing Darjeeling variety of oranges since 2021.

“Seeing my success many farmers of the village are gradually becoming interested in orange farming,” Mansur said.

Dinesh Chandra Sen, a fruit seller in Mahiganj area of Rangpur city said they were buying each kg of oranges and malta from local orchards at Tk 90 to Tk 100 and selling the fruits at Tk 120 to Tk 130 to the buyers.

Hasan Ali, a buyer at College Road in Kurigram town said locally produced oranges and malta are a bit smaller in sizes, but it tastes not much different from the imported one.

Kurigram DAE Deputy Director Abdullah Al Mamun said commercial cultivation of orange and malta is increasing every year because the soil in the region is suitable for such fruit cultivation.



Farm labourers harvest oranges from an orchard at Haribhanga village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Artistes vow to stay

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Naznin, who was not given her share of appreciation for her affiliation with BNP, said, “I want to remember the martyrs of July, who did not hesitate to risk their lives to gift us this newfound freedom, through this concert.”

Legendary singer Khurshid Alam was overjoyed to be a part of the concert, owing to the unity within musicians. “This is how united we all have to be, as musicians and as citizens of Bangladesh. Our country should come first.”

“Artistes like us, who support different political parties, particularly the BNP, have faced oppression simply for holding differing political beliefs. Nothing could be more disgraceful than this,” said Monir Khan. “This should never occur in the cultural sector. Now that we are united, I firmly believe that we can work towards building a better Bangladesh together.”

Asif Akbar, another outspoken artiste, said, “This time, we put Bangladesh first. I will be singing ‘Shabash Bangladesh’ — a song which was inexplicably banned during the previous regime, just because I sang it.”

The programme, hosted by Rafsan Sabab and Shanta Rahman, also had representation from Baul artistes such as Chisty Baul and Aleya Begum. Syed Abdul Hadi, Moushumi, Ethun Babu, Nasir Khan, Imran, Kona, Xefar and Pritom also entertained the audience as solo artistes.

Pritom Hasan, a generational artiste, told The Daily Star, “It is an honour to perform in this concert, with so many esteemed artistes. We hope for a united Bangladesh, going forward.”

“Jhumka” famed singer Xefar expressed hopes that

a new nation will emerge, thriving further than was ever possible before.

BNP Joint Secretary Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anee, convener of the concert, said, “I pay my deepest respects to Martyred President Ziaur Rahman, the Freedom Fighters of 1971 and the martyrs of July. I have often heard our youth celebrate occasions with Hindi songs — let's get out of this culture. Today, through the ‘Shobar Agye Bangladesh’ concert, we renew our allegiance to our rich culture.”

Nagar Baul, Ark, Artcell, Shironamhin, Different Touch and AvidRafa were the bands who rocked the event.

While every performance was worth commending, the night truly hit its crescendo when Nagar Baul took to stage, as the crowd erupted in a deafening roar.

The “Guru” of Bangla rock, James, was virtually illegible over 30,000 people singing “Baba”, “Pagla Hawa”, and “Ma” with him.

The energy did not budge as the clock neared midnight, but as all good things have to come to an end, so did this concert, one which aimed to unite the people of the country on the joyous occasion of a victory day.

Five killed

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The autorickshaw was crushed between the two, resulting in the deaths of five people on the spot, said Md Saju Mia, the officer-in-charge of Bhairab Highway Police Station.

Police seized the lorry and the pick-up truck but the drivers managed to flee the scene.

Tigers eye T20 series win

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tone with a four-over spell that cost just 13 runs and yielded four wickets.

West Indies skipper Rovman Powell, who made 60 off 35 balls, nearly snatched the match away from Bangladesh alongside Romario Shephard (22 off 17) with a 67-run stand off 33 balls.

Taskin Ahmed, who finished with 2-28, broke the stand in the 18th

over by getting Shephard caught at deep mid-wicket. He conceded just two in that over and Tanzim Sakib gave away eight in the 19th to leave 10 for Hasan Mahmud to defend in the last over.

Hasan started the 20th conceding a single, followed it up with a dot against Powell, and got the batter caught behind in the third ball. A bye run came off the fourth delivery and

then Hasan uprooted the stumps of Alzarri Joseph (9 off 11) to seal the victory.

With a series win in the offing, stand in skipper Liton wants his team to play with the same approach in the final match. “I want them to play aggressive cricket. They are showing their quality and playing really good cricket at the moment... If we play good for another game, we can win the series.”

Tabligh factions sue each other

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responsible for the attacks during the 2018 Ijtema.

This time, a clash broke out between the two groups, leaving five people injured, locals said.

Following the incident, Saad faction leader Shihab Uddin filed a case with Tongi West Police Station against 34 members of the Zubair faction on Friday.

Mohammad Hossain, a follower of Zubair faction,

filed a case against 15 followers of Saad on Sunday.

According to the case statement, the accused recklessly drove their vehicles on December 12, causing severe injuries and committing offences under sections 114, 506, and 34 of the Road Transport Act 2018.

Earlier, in the presence of home and religious affairs advisers on November 14, the two

groups agreed that the upcoming Biswa Ijtema would be organised in two separate phases like previous years until the government addresses the conflict between the two groups in April next year.

Gazipur Metropolitan Police Commissioner Nazmul Karim Khan said, “Anyone can make their demands, but I'm not showing any biases. I'm working in accordance with government directives.”

25 ASPs served show-cause

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could not run properly. Despite repeated instructions to run, you did not comply and instead began hurling abusive words. Such behaviour created a chaotic environment in the field. As a trainee ASP (probationer), your actions severely disrupted overall training activities and encouraged others to violate discipline. Such conduct constitutes disobedience of legitimate orders, dereliction of duty, and a breach of discipline, amounting to misconduct,” the notice reads.

On October 20, the government suspended the passing-out parade of the trainee officers of the 40th BCS (Bangladesh Civil

Service).

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury was scheduled to inspect the parade as the chief guest. However, it was suspended the night before for “unavoidable circumstances.” Neither the authorities concerned nor the home adviser offered a clear explanation for the sudden decision.

On November 19, the graduation ceremonies for trainee ASPs and trainee sub-inspectors (SIs) at the Bangladesh Police Academy in Sardah were postponed.

The trainee ASPs from the 40th BCS batch and trainee SIs from the 40th outside cadet batch were scheduled to graduate

on November 24 and 26, respectively.

The postponement followed a press conference on October 17, where BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed demanded the cancellation of appointments for over 800 SIs and 67 ASPs, accusing the ousted Awami League regime of making partisan appointments.

The issue of appointments has been contentious since the fall of the Awami League-led government on August 5.

Since then, 313 out of 823 trainee SIs have been discharged from the police academy in three phases, reportedly for breaching discipline during training sessions.