

Natsamrat Delights Delhi Audiences with Laughter-Filled Performances



Play Scene

Delhi based Natsamrat again came up with its plays which were full of laughter and four plays which were loved by the audience.

Two plays were staged on 16th November. At 3:00 PM Anton Chekhov's famous story "The Proposal" was staged. The Proposal is the story of a young man who proposes marriage to his neighbour's unmarried daughter. The story turns worse when the three of them start arguing over whose property it is and whose dog is better. At 4:15 PM the same evening, the play "Kallu Barber MBBS" written by Moliere was staged in which a barber is always drunk and beats his wife. The barber's wife promises herself that she will teach her husband a lesson. During this time she meets two servants who are looking for a doctor to cure their master's daughter's muteness. The barber's wife tells him that there is such a doctor here, but

he does not consider himself a doctor until he is beaten up properly. Both the servants beat up the barber and force him to become a doctor and take him to their master. Later on, the play takes a very interesting turn.

On 17th November, two plays were staged. At 3 pm, the play "Haye Mera Dil" written by Ranbir Singh, which is the story of a delusional patient who believes that he is going to die and is worried about what will happen to his wife after him, she is very innocent, she will not be able to take care of herself, so he wants to get his wife married again. And later on, the play takes a different turn. At 4:15 pm the same evening, the play "Kambakht Ishq" written by Satya Prakash, which is the story of two old people who have fallen ill due to loneliness and when they meet each other, they understand that they need a support, so that they can share their loneliness.

All the four plays were directed by Shyam Kumar. Among the actors Vishwajeet, Munmun, Shivangi, Arvind Shandilya, Aman Kumar, Vansh Rathore, Raman Kumar and Shammi played their roles brilliantly. Stage managers Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh, stage manager assistants Himanshu and Nisha, makeup Payal, costume assistants Rohit Prasad and Rekha Devi, music director Vansh Rathore. The play was staged at LTG auditorium Mandi House New Delhi.

**A Masterful Comedy of
Deception: *Gorakhdhanda***

Delights Audiences with Humor and Insight

On November 10, the Mask Players Art Group brought to life Jayvardhan's comedy play Gorakhdhanda at Gurugram's Rang Parivartan Auditorium, delighting audiences with laughter and charm under the skilled direction of Chandrashekhar Sharma.

The storyline of Gorakhdhanda is a clever, layered satire on deception and morality, following the antics of a crafty property dealer and his equally sly servant. The two exploit a unique business model—illegally renting out government houses. Enlisting the help of a resourceful actor friend, they devise numerous ways to extract extra money from unsuspecting tenants. They pose as fake police officers, manufacture absurd emergencies, and even cut off tenants' cable wires, all to manipulate and swindle money out of them.



However, their clever games reach a turning point when they encounter a new tenant, Geeta, a quick-witted woman who begins to see through their schemes. Unlike previous tenants, Geeta decides to fight back, taking matters into her own hands. Her pushback throws the scheming trio into a spiral of missteps, confusion, and unintended consequences. This leads to a brilliantly funny climax, where each character is forced to confront the absurdity of their deception, making for a deeply engaging and humorous plot twist.

Chandrashekhhar Sharma's direction is seamless, reflecting both his understanding of the play's humor and his ability to highlight social commentary without losing the comedic essence. Sharma managed to balance the farcical elements of the story with a simplicity that made the scenes relatable and accessible. His careful pacing kept the audience engaged, and he ensured that every punchline landed. The transitions between scenes were smooth, and the intricate dynamics between

characters were allowed to unfold naturally, making for a cohesive performance that held the audience's attention from start to finish.

The cast of Gorakhdhanda shone on stage, each actor embracing their character with authenticity and energy. Ashish Sharma, Nikhil Jha, Eva Dandona, Pushkar Sagar, Ashutosh Srivastava, Jatin, and Mayank Sharma added rich layers to the play with their roles, enhancing the comedic timing and providing moments of slapstick that were both skillful and hilarious.

Together, the ensemble cast displayed a natural chemistry, enhancing each other's performances and creating a lively atmosphere on stage. Their nuanced expressions, quick timing, and humorous dialogues conveyed not only the humor but also the subtle social critique embedded in the play.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated technical team brought the world of Gorakhdhanda to life with admirable precision. Sarita Rana, Manoj, Rakesh Sharma, Sangeeta Suyal, and Mamta Rani were instrumental in handling the set changes, props, and lighting that supported the narrative. Their efforts ensured that each scene flowed effortlessly, with no disruptions, adding polish to the production. The set design was simple but effective, allowing the audience to focus on the characters while still providing the necessary realism for the setting. Lighting and sound cues were timely, which helped to heighten the comedic moments and emphasized the shifts in tone as the story progressed.

For those who missed the Gurugram performance, there's good news—the play will be staged again on November 16 at Blank Canvas Studio, Mandi House, New Delhi, promising another evening of laughter and insight.

Kala Sankul's Seminar Unites India's Diverse Folk Traditions



A monthly art seminar was organized on 27 October 2024 at the 'Kala Sankul' of Sanskar Bharti, Delhi, in which a unique confluence of India's cultural diversity and unity was seen. Padmashree Ramdayal Sharma ji, who is a reputed Nautanki artist and guru, was present as a special guest in this program.

The program started with the lighting of the lamp where Sanskar Bharti's Rashtriya Sangathan Mantri Abhijeet Gokhale, Ashok Tiwari, Digvijay Singh, Padmashree Ramdayal Sharma, Shyam Kumar, Raj Upadhyay, Deputy Registrar O.P. Sagar, Shruti Sinha were present.

The program started with captivating presentations of various folk dances, in which Manya Narang, Divya Kumari, Lavanya Sinha, Avya Tiwari and Katha Vachika Ruhi Jaiswal, under the

leadership of Ms. Sneha Mukherjee, presented the folk dances of Rajasthan and Haryana in a very lively form. After this, Ms. Prabha Dubey's group Rashmi Singh, Pooja Tripathi, Vaishnavi, Akshit Pratap Singh, Durga Bashakh, Jyoti Sharma, Gargi Savaria, Nitya Bansal, Bhavya Bansal and Megha Jain mesmerized the audience by presenting a unique amalgamation of Garba, Dandiya and Bengal's Dhunuchi dance.

Padma Shri Ramdayal Sharma Ji in his speech highlighted the antiquity of Nautanki and its Indianness. He told that Nautanki is basically an expression of religious and Indian consciousness, and maintaining its purity is the need of the hour. Initially, Nautanki art was known as Swang and Bhagat.

In earlier times, there was no stage art without Indian consciousness. If the sufferings faced by King Harishchandra for the truth are shown through art, then the new generation will have Indian consciousness.

The program was conducted by Garima Rani Ji, while the vote of thanks was presented by Shruti Sinha Ji. This seminar emerged as a symbol of Indian culture, folk art and national unity, in which art teachers, researchers and art lovers participated in large numbers. Raj Upadhyay, Shyam Kumar, Pradeep Pathak, Raman Kumar, Aanchal Kumari, Tarushi, Anjali Kumari, Sakshi Sharma, Saurabh Kumar, Harshit Kumar, Raman Kumar, Brajesh Vishwakarma, Satyam Kumar along with the manager of the Kala Sankul Digvijay Pandey, Mrityunjay Kumar, Sushant contributed to making the program successful.

Natsamrat Delights Audiences

with a Blend of Comedy, Drama, and Social Messages



Delhi based Natsamrat once again brought comedy filled plays for the audience. Plays written by Anton Chekhov, Moliere and Satya Prakash were staged under the direction of Shyam Kumar. On 2nd and 5th October such plays were staged in LTG Auditorium (Blank Canvas), Mandi House, New Delhi in which the director also tried to give a message to the society through his plays and that message touched the hearts of the audience.

On 2nd October two plays were staged. The first play "The Proposal" written by Anton Chekhov was staged. This is the story of a young man who proposes marriage to his neighbour's unmarried daughter. The story gets worse when the three of them start arguing about whose property it is and whose dog is better.

The play "Kallu Nai MBBS" written by Moliere was staged. The audience gathered in large numbers for the presentation of the

play. The audience applauded every dialogue. All the characters played their roles well.

The gist of the play is that a barber is always drunk and beats his wife. The barber's wife promises herself that she will teach her husband a lesson. Meanwhile, she meets a servant who is looking for a doctor to treat their master's daughter's dumbness. The barber's wife tells him that there is such a doctor here, but he does not consider himself a doctor until he is beaten up properly. The servant beat the barber and force him to become a doctor and take him to his master. Later on, the play takes a very good turn.

On 5 October, again "The Proposal" play was staged along with "Kambakht Ishq" written by Satya Prakash. In today's time, life has become so busy that children do not have time for their parents, due to which their parents start falling ill. Especially when someone's mother is alone and someone's father is alone. The story of the play Kambakht Ishq touched the hearts of the audience along with laughter because somewhere probably everyone was finding themselves in the same place which was being shown in the play.

Artists Vishwajeet, Munmun, Arvind Shandilya, Sudhir Khanna, Aman Kumar, Soumya Yadav, Shivangi and Raman Kumar played their roles very well. Stage Managers Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh, Set Managers Naushad and Rohit Prasad, Make-up artist Payal and Rajrani, Costume assistants Chhobi Saha and Rekha Devi, Music Operated by Vansh Rathore and light design by Natsamrat's director Shyam Kumar.

Indian Perspective and Challenges in Modern Theater Writing: Seminar held at Kala Sankul



29 September, New Delhi – In order to promote art and literature, the monthly theatre seminar organised by Sanskar Bharti, Delhi was organised at 'Kala Sankul'. The main theme of this seminar was 'Indian perspective and challenges in modern theatre writing'. Director of National School of Drama (NSD) Chittaranjan Tripathi and senior theatre critic Anil Goyal were present as keynote speakers.

In his speech, Chittaranjan Tripathi expressed deep concern over the current state of Indian theatre institutions and writing. He said that in today's time there is a huge shortage of writing material, which does not present the society and Indian perspective in the right way. He stressed that the study of Indian epics like Mahabharata is very important to understand the art, culture and history of India. According to Tripathi, today's youth is interested in theatre, but it is very important to write keeping Indianness at the centre.

He also discussed the tradition of folk theatre and said, "When we understand the folk, we will be able to make theatre better too." Explaining the importance of folk theatre, he said that it is a genre that is born and survives among the common people, which develops by keeping their life and behaviour at the centre.

Drama critic Anil Goyal also expressed his views on the Indian theatre tradition and criticised the wrong portrayal of history by some theatre writers of the past decades. He described the lack of young theatre writers as the biggest challenge of the present times. Goyal said, "The theatre world has always felt the lack of good writers. The film world may have got better writers, but this lack can be clearly seen in the theatre field."

It was also discussed in the seminar that in the desire for political correctness, difficult and complex issues did not find a place in plays. Referring to the writings based on the wars of 1962 and 1971, he said that films were made on these historical events, but effective plays were not written.

The program was inaugurated by National Organization Minister of Sanskar Bharati Abhijit Gokhale, Director of National School of Drama (NSD) Chittaranjan Tripathi, Senior Critic Anil Goyal, Kuldeep Sharma. Ashok Tiwari, Digvijay Singh, Registrar of NSD P.K. Mohanty and Deputy Registrar O.P. Sagar were present.

The presence of many Senior Theatre Director's like Mr. Ramdayal Sharma, Avtar Sahni, J.P. Singh, Rohit Tripathi, Chandrakanta Tripathi, Shyam Kumar, Raj Upadhyay, Bhupesh Joshi and Vashisht Upadhyay made the program special. The successful organization of the program was a proof of the dedication of all the members of Sanskar Bharati.

This seminar proved to be an important platform for Indian theatre, where serious discussions were held on the current

challenges of playwriting from the Indian perspective. Emphasizing the relevance of epics like Mahabharata, Tripathi told the need for playwrights to focus on Indian context. Anil Goyal, on the other hand, openly expressed his concerns on the lack of young writers and absence of serious subjects.

Overall, this symposium provides a great opportunity to rethink about the direction and challenges of writing in Indian theatre, which can provide inspiration and direction to upcoming writers.

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Corruption, Comedy, and Music: Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal Enthralls Delhi Audience



On the 14th and 15th of September, *Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal* was staged by New Delhi Performers at Alliance Française de Delhi, Lodi Estate, New Delhi, under the direction of Basab Bhattacharya. This musical comedy play, a Hindi adaptation of the renowned Marathi play *Vichha Majhi Puri Kara*, originally written by Vasant Sabnis and translated into Hindi by Usha Banerjee, focused on the theme of corruption. Through humor, music, and lively performances, the play delivered sharp satire.

Performed by the talented cast of *New Delhi Performers*, the play balanced entertainment with a strong message. It offered incisive commentary on power, greed, the inefficiency of administrative systems, making critical observations through its humorous lens.

The music and dance elements were key in keeping the audience engaged. The main objective of the play highlighting corruption through satire was successfully conveyed. Costumes and choreography were commendable, adding a vibrant touch to

the performances. The inclusion of contemporary film songs connected the play to the present day, allowing the audience to relate to the storyline more effectively.

The performances were a highlight, with Dhruv Sharma playing Maharaj, Animesh Singhal as Hawaldar, Arpan Arora in the role of Pradhan, and Abhishek as the energetic Sipahi. Chetna portrayed Mainavati, while Ritwik Marwah took on the role of Kotwal. Saurabh Bhutoria, in the role of Sakhiya, won the audience's applause with his stellar performance. The narrators, Hardik and Sheetal Marwah, added a guiding presence to the story. Behind the scenes, Vedant and Rinki lent their voices, while Dinesh played the harmonium and Harsh took charge of the dholak. Ved Deep led the Music, and Ritesh handled the lighting design.

Overall, *Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal* offered an engaging musical experience where the blend of music and lively performances drove the story forward. The cast's energetic presentation ensured that the audience left the theater entertained and impressed.

“Prem-Parinde”: A Tale of Changing Social Values in the Name of Love



On August 4, 2024, Mask Players Art Group performed the play "Prem-Parinde" at the Rangparivartan Auditorium in Gurugram.

Written and directed by Chandrashekhar Sharma, the play delves into the modern trend of forming romantic relationships without understanding their depth, turning it into a social pressure for today's youth. This phenomenon is leading to crimes in the name of love and causing familial disintegration. Additionally, social media is exacerbating the situation, with students prioritizing creating reels over building their future.

The play conveys its serious message in a humorous manner. The main character, Nisha, is a fan of a superstar and is so obsessed with movies that she lives her life in a cinematic way. This obsession leads her to fall in love with Rajan, a loafer who resembles a superstar, and she even finances his expenses. Their movie-like love story reaches a point where they realize they have only been deceiving each other under the guise of love and don't truly understand what love is.

The roles were well-portrayed by Pooja Singh as Nisha, Ashish Sharma as Rajan, Rakesh Sharma as the father, Hansika Jain as the wife, and Parth Srivastava as Bhola. The actors' timing was impeccable, adding to the entertainment of the audience. Behind the scenes, Nikhil Jha handled the lights and Mayank Sharma managed the music, both contributing significantly to the success of the presentation.

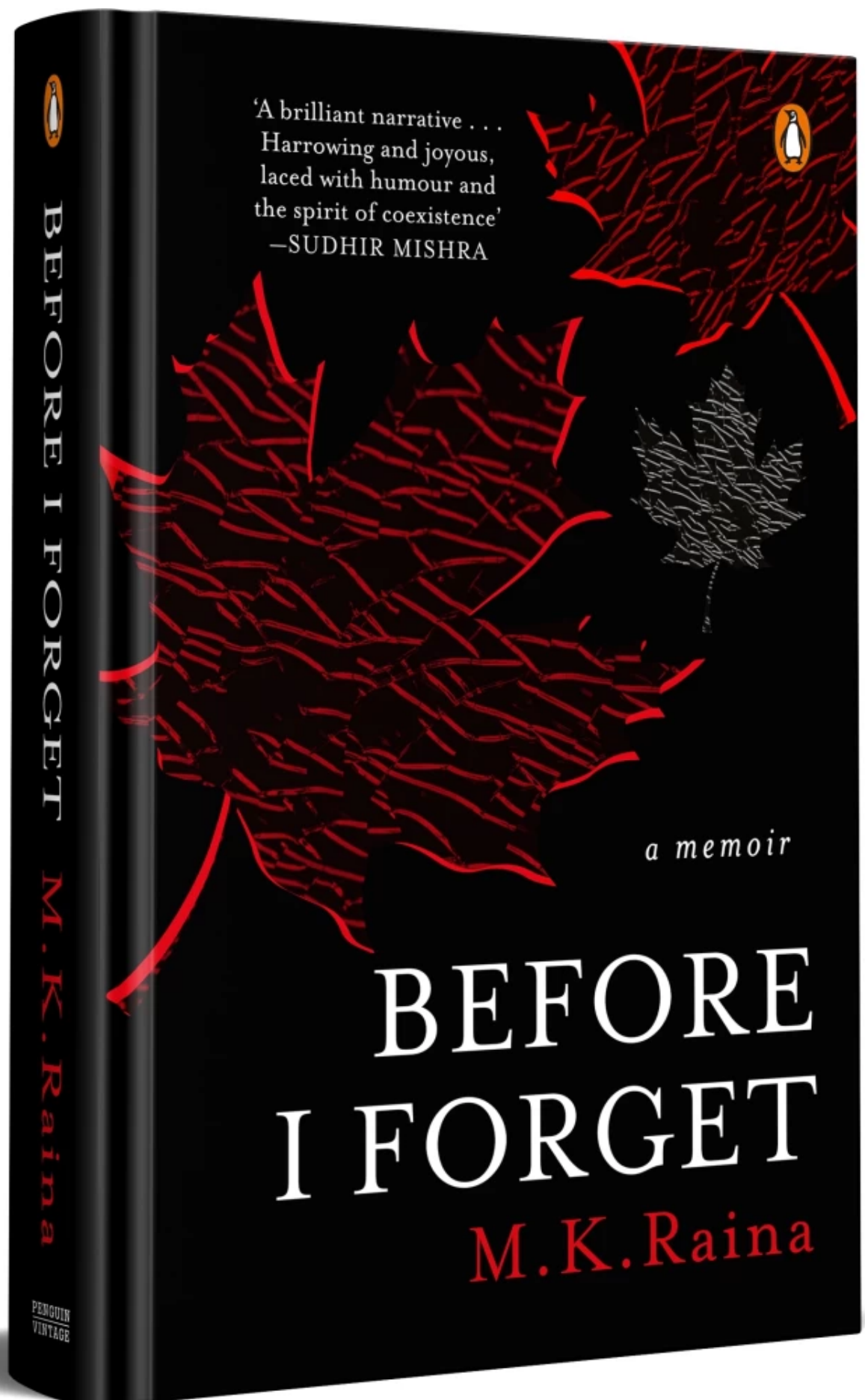
The play, while tickling the audience's funny bones, conveyed a profound message relevant to today's youth.

An Unforgettable Book

Discussion Conducted by Sujata and Oroon

Conversations: Before I Forget

Reviewed by **Manohar Khushalani**



M.K. Raina's memoir, "Before I Forget," is a deeply moving chronicle of his multifaceted life as a theatre actor,

director, and cultural activist. The memoir weaves through various stages of his life, from his serene childhood in Kashmir to his influential role in Delhi's theatre scene, and his poignant experiences during the turbulent periods of Kashmir's history. At IIC,



Sujata Prasad and Oroon Das, conducted an extremely engaging and memorable conversation with the author.

His narrative began with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Sheetal Nath Sathu Mohalla, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace, and his nurturing education at Lal Ded Primary School. This nostalgic recounting provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

The core of Raina's memoir focuses on his efforts to use

theatre as a tool for social change and healing. Despite the insurgency and violence in regions like Kashmir and the North-East, Raina set up theatre workshops aimed at reviving folk traditions and fostering community spirit. His work often put him in danger, yet he persisted, driven by a cause greater than activism—a belief in mending the fabric of society. One of his significant achievements was the successful theatre workshop in Kashmir in 2000, where he taught young locals not just theatre, but values of rationality and responsibility.

Raina's reflections on the political and cultural history of India are profound. He recounts witnessing turbulent times, the Emergency period, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Delhi riots, and the death of playwright Safdar Hashmi. These events are narrated with a historian's precision and a poet's sensitivity, capturing both the joy and sorrow of living through India's tumultuous times.

The memoir delves deeply into the traumatic period of the 1990s in Kashmir. Raina's mother's illness during the violence-ridden winter. Amidst curfews and security checks, he navigated the challenges of getting medical care for his mother, only to face the heartbreak of her passing. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits during this period is another painful memory, highlighting the erosion of centuries-old communal bonds.

Raina's narrative does not shy away from the complexities and mistrust that grew among communities: How even brothers became strangers, emphasizing the profound impact of fear. His return to Kashmir in the 2000s to conduct theatre workshops marked a significant effort to rebuild trust and revive cultural practices like the traditional folk theatre, Bhand Pather.

Raina balances personal anecdotes with broader socio-political observations. His encounters with cultural luminaries in Delhi, such as Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, and Om Puri, are interspersed with reflections on the decline of the city's

once-vibrant theatre scene

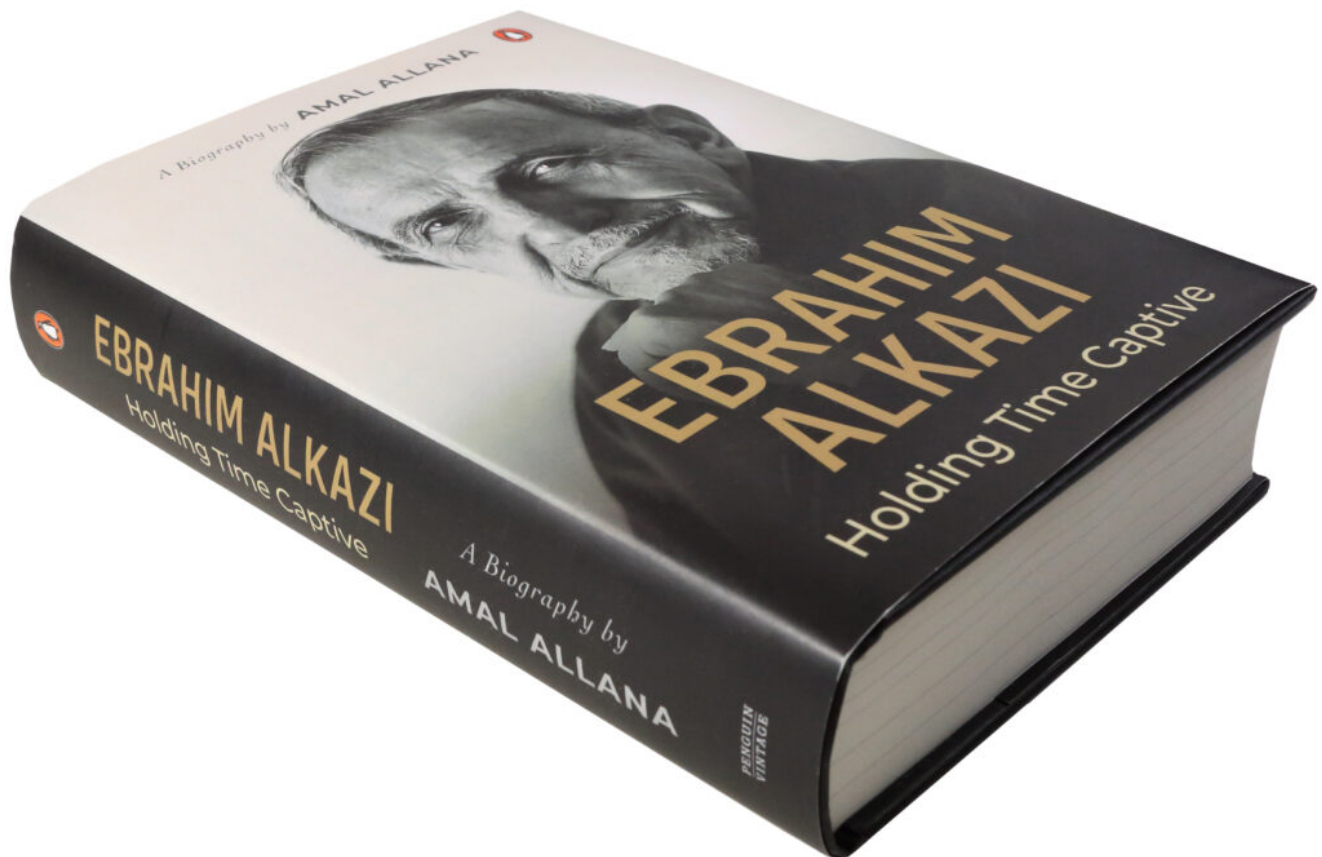
“Before I Forget” is a testament to M.K. Raina’s unwavering dedication to his craft and his cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict. His declaration, “We should never forget but always forgive”

First Published in IIC Diary April-May 2024



Ebrahim Alkazi: An uninhibited scholarly Tale of a Towering Thespian

Review by By Manohar Khushalani



The launch and discussion at the India International Centre (IIC) of a multilayered narrative, “Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive,” shed light on the life and legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi, a towering figure in twentieth-century Indian theater and visual arts. Amal Allana, Alkazi’s daughter, presents a meticulously researched account of her father’s life, offering insights into his role in shaping the cultural landscapes of Mumbai and Delhi from the 1940s to the 2000s.

Ebrahim Alkazi, renowned as a theater doyen and pedagogue, passed away at the age of 94, leaving behind a monumental legacy in Indian theater. His career spanned an impressive 74 years, during which he directed iconic plays such as Girish Karnad’s “Tughlaq” and mentored generations of actors, including Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri. Alkazi’s upbringing, education, and early associations with the Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group laid the foundation for his groundbreaking contributions to Indian theater.

As the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama, Alkazi revolutionized Hindi theater with his visionary

approach and technical precision. His establishment of the Repertory Company and the School of Dramatic Arts showcased his commitment to nurturing talent and promoting theatrical excellence. Beyond theater, Alkazi's influence extended to the visual arts, as evidenced by his founding of the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi with his wife, Roshan Alkazi.

Allana's biography not only celebrates her father's professional achievements, but also delves uninhibitedly into his personal life, providing a nuanced portrait of a multifaceted individual. Through interviews, archival research, and personal recollections, Allana, herself a renowned and celebrated theatre director, offers readers a glimpse into Alkazi's emotional journey and his profound impact on modern Indian cultural history.

The discussion at the IIC, moderated by Naman Ahuja, further enriched the narrative, with Allana engaging in conversation about her father's legacy and the process of writing his biography. Dramatic readings by two actors, Sonam Kalra and Rehaan Engineer, added depth and resonance to the event, underscoring the theatricality inherent in Alkazi's life and work.

Overall, "Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive" stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a cultural icon. Allana's narrative, both enthralling and critically astute, pays homage to Alkazi's monumental contributions while situating him within the broader context of modern Indian cultural history.

First Published in IIC Diary February-March 2024

An Uninhibited Tale of a Towering Thespian

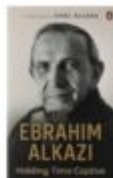
BOOK LAUNCH: *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive* by Amal Alkazi (Penguin Random House, 2024)

DISCUSSANTS: Amal Alkazi in conversation with Naman P. Ahuja

READINGS BY: Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer

COLLABORATION: Penguin Random House

22 March 2024



The birth and discussion of a multilayered narrative, *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive*, does right to the life and legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi, a towering figure in 20th-century Indian theatre and visual arts. Amal Alkazi, Alkazi's daughter, presents a meticulously researched account of her father's life, offering insights into his role in shaping the cultural landscapes of Mumbai and Delhi from the 1940s to the 2000s.

Alkazi, renowned as a theatre director and pedagogue, passed away at the age of 84, leaving behind a monumental legacy in Indian theatre. His career spanned an impressive 74 years, during which he directed iconic plays such as Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, and mentored generations of actors, including Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri. Alkazi's upbringing, education and early association with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group laid the foundation for his groundbreaking contributions to Indian theatre.

As the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama (NSD), Alkazi revolutionised Hindi theatre with his visionary approach and technical precision. His establishment of the NSD Repertory Company and the School of Dramatic Arts, Mumbai, showcased his commitment to nurturing talent and promoting theatrical excellence. Beyond theatre, Alkazi's influence extended to the visual arts, as evidenced by his founding of the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi with his wife, Rubina Alkazi.

Alkazi's biography not only celebrates his father's professional achievements but also delves unflinchingly into his personal life, providing a nuanced portrait of the multifaceted individual. Through interviews, archival research and personal reflections, Alkazi, herself a renowned and celebrated theatre director, offers readers a glimpse into Alkazi's emotional journey and his profound impact on modern Indian cultural history.

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The discussion, moderated by Naman Ahuja, further enriched the narrative, with Alkazi engaging in conversation about her father's legacy and the process of writing his biography. Dramatic readings by Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer added depth and resonance to the event, underscoring the theatricality inherent in Alkazi's life and work.

The book stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a cultural icon. Alkazi's narrative, both enthralling and critically astute, pays homage to Alkazi's monumental contributions while situating him within the broader context of modern Indian cultural history.

• MANISHA KHUSHALAM