

# “आत्मसंज्ञा” : A Vivid Exploration of Identity Through the Art of Uttarakhand



Held from **May 19 to 22, 2025**, at **Kala Sankul**, Sanskar Bharati's esteemed cultural centre in **New Delhi**, the group art exhibition “आत्मसंज्ञा” (meaning *identity*) is a compelling tribute to the artistic spirit of **Uttarakhand**. Organized by the **Rangeet Art Centre, Haldwani (Nainital)**, the exhibition aims to give national visibility to the region's artists—both emerging and established.

This thoughtfully curated event showcases contemporary artworks that are deeply rooted in the cultural soil of Uttarakhand. It presents a striking fusion of folk traditions and modern expression, offering viewers a fresh perspective on the region's identity, struggles, and everyday beauty.

The **inaugural event** was attended by notable figures including **Shri Ashok Tiwari** (Central Executive Member & Secretary, Sanskar Bharati), **Shri Digvijay Pandey** (Manager, Kala Sankul), **Shri Himanshu Dabral** (Programme Coordinator, Lalit Kala Akademi), and senior artists **Naval Kishore** and **Ajay Sameer**,

who lent their support and presence to the cause of regional art.

The artworks featured in **काला संकुल** reflect the landscapes, lifestyles, and layered emotions of mountain life. From the role of women in society to the quiet resilience of remote communities, each canvas tells a story with nuance and sincerity. In some works, traditional folk art forms like *Aipan* are reimagined through a contemporary lens—bridging past and present in powerful visual narratives.

The exhibition includes works by a diverse group of artists: **Tshering Negi, Priyom Talukdar, Kusum Pandey, Papil Manna, Maninder Singh, Shanu Sharma, Chetan Joshi, Kaveesh Nabiya, Ritika Bhatt, Dipanshu Dugtal, Khasti Palari, Riya Kabdal, and Archita Padiyar.**

Despite their varied techniques and themes, what unites them is a shared commitment to giving voice to Uttarakhand's cultural heritage.

Located in the heart of Delhi, **Kala Sankul** is more than just a gallery—it is a dynamic space for artistic exchange rooted in Indian knowledge traditions. The venue regularly hosts panel discussions, performances, and cultural programs, making it an ideal platform for showcasing regional creativity on a national stage.

In essence, **काला संकुल** is not merely an art exhibition—it is a cultural statement. It reaffirms the idea that art, when grounded in identity and tradition, can transcend regional boundaries and speak to a larger collective consciousness.

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# Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain— A Mirror to Modern Madness



On April 29, 2025, the Sammukh auditorium of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, witnessed a deeply moving theatrical experience as part of the 'Katharang' series. The play "**Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain**", presented by Mailorang (Maithili Lok Rang) and staged by Sambhav Theatre Group, resonated profoundly with the audience. Based on a powerful short story of the same name by noted writer Umashankar Chaudhary, the production explored the contradictions and emotional fragmentation in contemporary society through an impactful dramatic interpretation.

Directed by Professor Devendra Raj Ankur, the play reflected a sharp eye for detail and a deep sense of social sensitivity. He intricately wove the essence of the original story into the dramatic structure, using characters as instruments to deliver

a scathing commentary on present-day societal realities.

Amit Saxena delivered a layered and sensitive portrayal of the son. His internal conflict, the clash between duty and emotion, and the discomfort arising from Ayodhya Babu's supposed madness were brought out with striking realism.

Hema Bisht, as the mother, left an unforgettable impression – especially in the final scene where her silent, broken presence on the deathbed conveyed volumes. Her performance evoked quiet grief and emotional depth.

Amitabh Srivastava brought the complex and multi-dimensional character of Ayodhya Babu alive on stage. His portrayal transcended mere eccentricity, revealing a soul tormented by truth and resistance against social hypocrisy. His 'madness' became a metaphor for the courage to speak truth in a world of convenient lies.

The lighting design by Raghav Prakash Mishra played a vital role in enhancing the emotional gravity of the scenes. Particularly in the strained moments between mother and son, the lighting subtly underlined the unspoken pain and tension.

With its naturalistic language, piercing dialogues, and emotionally resonant characters, the play captivated the audience from beginning to end. It was not merely a source of entertainment, but an invitation to introspect.

**“Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain”** compels us to ask: who is truly mad – the one who dares to speak the truth, or the one who comfortably lives with lies? This remarkable production by Maithili Lok Rang and Sambhav Theatre Group stood out as a shining example of theatrical depth, creativity, and social commitment. By the final scene, the audience was not only emotionally moved but left with lingering questions and reflections.

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# When Objects Spoke, and ‘Gareeb Nawaz’ Raised a Question: A Moving Theatrical Evening in Katharang



On 27th April 2025, at the Sammukh Auditorium of the National School of Drama, Delhi, the theatrical evening under the “Katharang” program—organized by **Mailorang (Maithili Lok Rang), Delhi**—featured Sambhav’s evocative presentation “**Unke Hisse Ka Prem evam Gareeb Nawaz**”. The performance offered an experience that touched audiences at their very core.

The direction was helmed by senior theatre practitioner Prof. Devendra Raj Ankur, whose theatrical finesse was evident in

every scene and every emotion of the presentation.

The first story viewed love from an unusual yet striking perspective—where inanimate objects, rather than humans, become witnesses. Set in an office, the hidden layers of a boss's romantic entanglements are brought to life through the voices of his desk, chair, diary, mirror, and pen. While the concept sounds extraordinary, it was executed on stage with remarkable ease and believability. These lifeless symbols transformed into living characters before the audience's eyes, each one addressing the viewers—sometimes with sarcasm, at other times with compassion. The director's choice to turn objects into "characters" was a daring experiment in theatre, and it proved to be a wholly rewarding one.

The second story depicted a contemporary conflict within society, rendered in a simple yet powerful form. The struggle between Vishwamohan—who returns from America to start a BPO—and Riyaz, who opens a modest "Gareeb Nawaz Chicken Shop" next door, is not merely a business rivalry. It becomes a clash of two worldviews. Beneath its humor and wit, the story makes a poignant commentary: in the blind race for development, how many truths are trampled, and how many "Gareeb Nawaz" figures are pushed to the margins?

On stage, Nidhi Mishra, Gauri Dewal, Rachita Verma, Amitabh Srivastava, Amit Saxena, Harikesh Maurya, Sahaj Harjai, and Prakash Jha brought their characters to life with such intensity and nuance that each scene appeared to unfold right before the audience's eyes. Their performances added soul to the characters, going beyond mere dialogues. Behind the scenes, too, a dedicated creative team worked tirelessly.

Music selection was curated by Rajesh Singh, and technical operation during the performance managed by Unish Yadav and Sahaj Harjai, whose acoustic execution ensured precise alignment of sound with the emotional tone and rhythm of each scene.

Lighting was sensitively designed by Raghav Prakash Mishra, whose balance of light and shadow added both visual clarity and thematic depth. Every aspect of stage design, management, and visual aesthetics reflected a mature professional sensibility and deep theatrical insight, elevating the performance to a level of artistic completeness.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that this presentation offered more than just two stories—it offered two distinct philosophies of life. One, where love remains forever incomplete; and the other, where in the name of “success,” human relationships and grounded realities are blurred. Prof. Devendra Raj Ankur’s endeavor reaffirmed that theatre does not end at the stage—it becomes an extension of our consciousness.

Sambhav’s performance reminded us that when acting, direction, and thought move in unison, theatre becomes more than performance—it becomes a dialogue that resonates deeply within the viewer, long after the lights have dimmed.

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**Sanskar Bharti Kala Sankul  
Once Again became the Witness  
of a Mesmerizing Journey of  
Art, Devotion, and Dialogue**



The monthly symposium began with a heartfelt tribute to the innocent civilians martyred in the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam. All present members observed two minutes of silence, expressing their emotions in an unspeakable way. The entire atmosphere seemed to be immersed in a silent prayer.

On the auspicious occasion of the lighting of the lamp, all distinguished guests performed the lamp lighting ceremony, illuminating the stage.

Following this, a melodious stream of music began. The soulful singing by Mr. Vijay Rawal and Mr. Veer Mani Trivedi touched the hearts of everyone present. Their mastery of voice filled the atmosphere with unseen compassion and hope.

The main attraction of the symposium was the analytical discussion on the theatrical presentation '**Arey Gadbadī Ho Gayī**', inspired by the Sanskrit play '**Bhagavadjukkam**' by Bodhayan, directed by Raj Upadhyay, and performed by Navras Group.

In this discussion, the depth of the story, authenticity of the acting, the liveliness of the stage arrangement, and the artistic features of the entire presentation were examined in detail. Critics appreciated the dedication and effort of the Navras Group artists, stating that the presentation not only entertained but also sparked deep contemplation.

The Navras Group artists were deeply moved after hearing such a heartfelt and in-depth review of their performance. They expressed that such analytical discussions inspired them to further deepen their theatrical practice. They also expressed their gratitude to Sanskar Bharti for providing such a valuable platform.

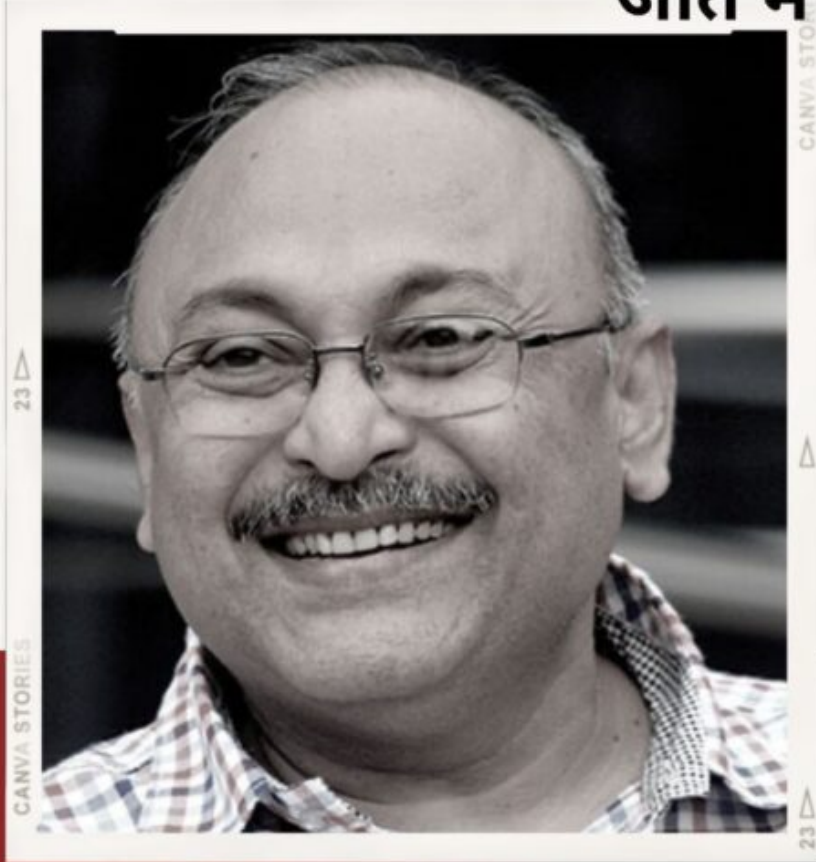
To elevate the dignity of the event, the presence of several distinguished guests was noteworthy. Dr. Prashant Upadhyay, Delhi Province Minister, Senior NSD theater artist Mr. Pradeep Mohanty, Mrs. Shashi Prabha Tiwari, educationist Dr. Ruchika,





तू ज़िंदा है तो ज़िंदगी की

जीत में यक़ीन कर...



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...dream**

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Brief Biodata

Vagish K Jha held a Master degree in Philosophy and Masters in

History from J.N.U, New Delhi. In the field of communication, he had ventured into journalism, theatre, television and has also written articles in national dailies and magazines

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## The Intersection of Art and Constitution: A Republic Day Symposium at Kala Sankul



New Delhi, January 26: A special monthly symposium was organized at Sanskar Bharati's central office, 'Kala Sankul,' on the eve of Republic Day. The theme of the symposium was "The Artist's Vision of the Soul of the Indian Constitution," with Shri Lakshmi Narayan Bhala Ji, a senior pracharak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and an expert on the Indian Constitution, as the keynote speaker.

The event began with floral tributes to the portrait of Bharat Mata and a ceremonial worship. During the session, Shri Bhala Ji shed light on the historical and cultural significance of the illustrations created by Nandalal Bose in the original manuscript of the Indian Constitution. He emphasized that these illustrations are not merely decorative but serve as a vivid reflection of Indian civilization, culture, and the soul of the Constitution. Through these artworks, the traditions, glorious history, and values of India's freedom struggle have been effectively conveyed.

Shri Bhala Ji elaborated on the role of these illustrations in each chapter of the Constitution. He highlighted that great artist like Nandalal Bose dedicated their artistic expertise to give each page of the Constitution a unique identity. These illustrations incorporate significant elements from the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Buddhism, and key events of India's freedom struggle, portraying the Indian Constitution as a living and inspiring document.

The symposium witnessed participation from a large number of art enthusiasts and thinkers, who regarded it as an inspiring opportunity to understand Indian art traditions. The officials of Sanskar Bharati expressed gratitude to everyone involved and resolved to continue organizing such motivational events in the future.

All India Organization Minister Shri Abhijit Gokhale and Area Organization Minister Shri Vijay Kumar were specially present on the occasion. The symposium was skillfully conducted by Garima Rani, while the vote of thanks was delivered by Shri Kuldeep Sharma, the convenor of the drama symposium. The success of the event was supported by significant contributions from Shri Vishwadeep, Pradeep Pathak, Ms. Anchal, Sushank, Shivam Mrityunjay, Saurabh, Harshit, Raman, and Kala Sankul's administration head, Shri Digvijay Pandey.

This symposium was a commendable effort to unveil the depth of

the Indian Constitution, and the unique aspects of Indian culture embedded within it. The illustrations by Nandalal Bose not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the Constitution but also symbolize India's soul and its rich historical heritage. Such events provide an opportunity to connect with Indian traditions and culture while deepening respect for the Constitution.

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## **“Kavi Saptak: A Celebration of Poetry and Creativity at Vanmali Srujan Kendra, Bhopal”**



Bhopal. Vanmali Srujan Kendra, Bhopal unit organized a special poetry recitation series called 'Kavi Saptak' in the Muktdhara Auditorium of Rabindranath Tagore University on 23 December 2024. In which talented poets of Rabindranath Tagore University and Scope Global Skill University mesmerized the audience with their creations.

In this program, Shashwat Verma, Ashi Dixit, Vikrant Bhatt, Vishakha Rajurkar Raj, Mudit Srivastava and Mausami Parihar recited their poems, which immersed the auditorium in literary essence. Shashwat was seen communicating with his inner self in his poems, while the freshness of language was seen in Ashi's poems. Vikrant presented his curiosities in poetry. Vishakha scattered the rainbow colors of love in her poems. Mudit worked to bind the events of life and the fine lines of nature in language. Mausami expressed her tender restlessness through poems.

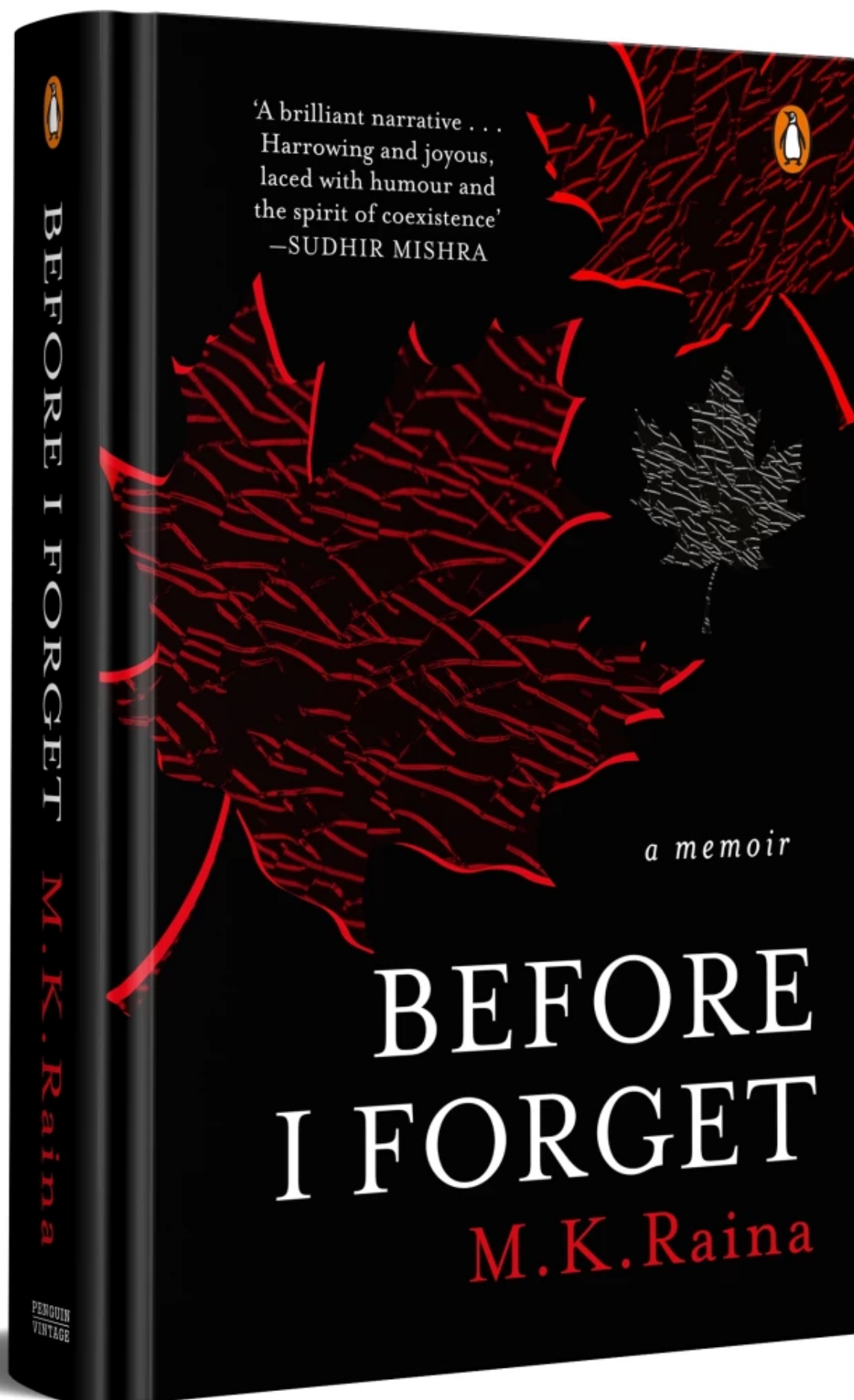
The program was presided over by Dr. Veena Sinha ji, President of Vanmali Srujan Kendra, Bhopal unit. Who congratulated the poets and shared her views on their poems. Shri Vinay Upadhyay ji also praised the poets and the new experiments done in their creations. At the end of the program, Dr. Savitri Singh Parihar, Coordinator of Sanskrit Oriental Language and Indian Knowledge Tradition Center, expressed her gratitude to everyone. Student Pushpendra, Chairman of Virasat Samiti, conducted the program efficiently, and on this occasion teachers of the Faculty of Humanities and Liberal Arts and students of Natya Vidyalaya were also present as spectators. Due to which the program got a wide and enthusiastic audience. 'Kavi Saptak' not only provided a platform to poetry lovers but also promoted literary dialogue and creativity.

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# **An Unforgettable Book Discussion Conducted by Sujata and Oroon**

**Conversations: Before I Forget**

Reviewed by Manohar Khushalani



'A brilliant narrative . . .  
Harrowing and joyous,  
laced with humour and  
the spirit of coexistence'  
—SUDHIR MISHRA

*a memoir*

# BEFORE I FORGET

**M.K. Raina**

PENGUIN  
VINTAGE

**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**

**A Rich Tapestry of Events and Anecdotes**

**TITLE:** Before I Forget  
**CONVERSATION BETWEEN:** M.K. Raina, Sujata (Prasad) and Deepan Das  
**COLLABORATION:** Aftab Anwar  
**29 May 2024**

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.

His narrative begins with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Sherali Nathi Saini mohalla, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in support, and his nurturing education at Lal Dool Primary School. This nostalgic recollection provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

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The core of Raina's memoir is his efforts to use theatre as a tool for social change and healing. Despite the insurgency and violence in regions like Kashmir and the northeast, Raina set up theatre workshops to revive folk traditions and foster community spirit. One of his significant achievements was the successful Theatre Workshop in Kashmir in 2002, 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, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Gulf War of 1994, and the death of playwright Jhumpa Lahiri. These events are related with a historian's precision and a poet's sensitivity, capturing both the joy and sense of living through India's tumultuous times.

Raina's work 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.

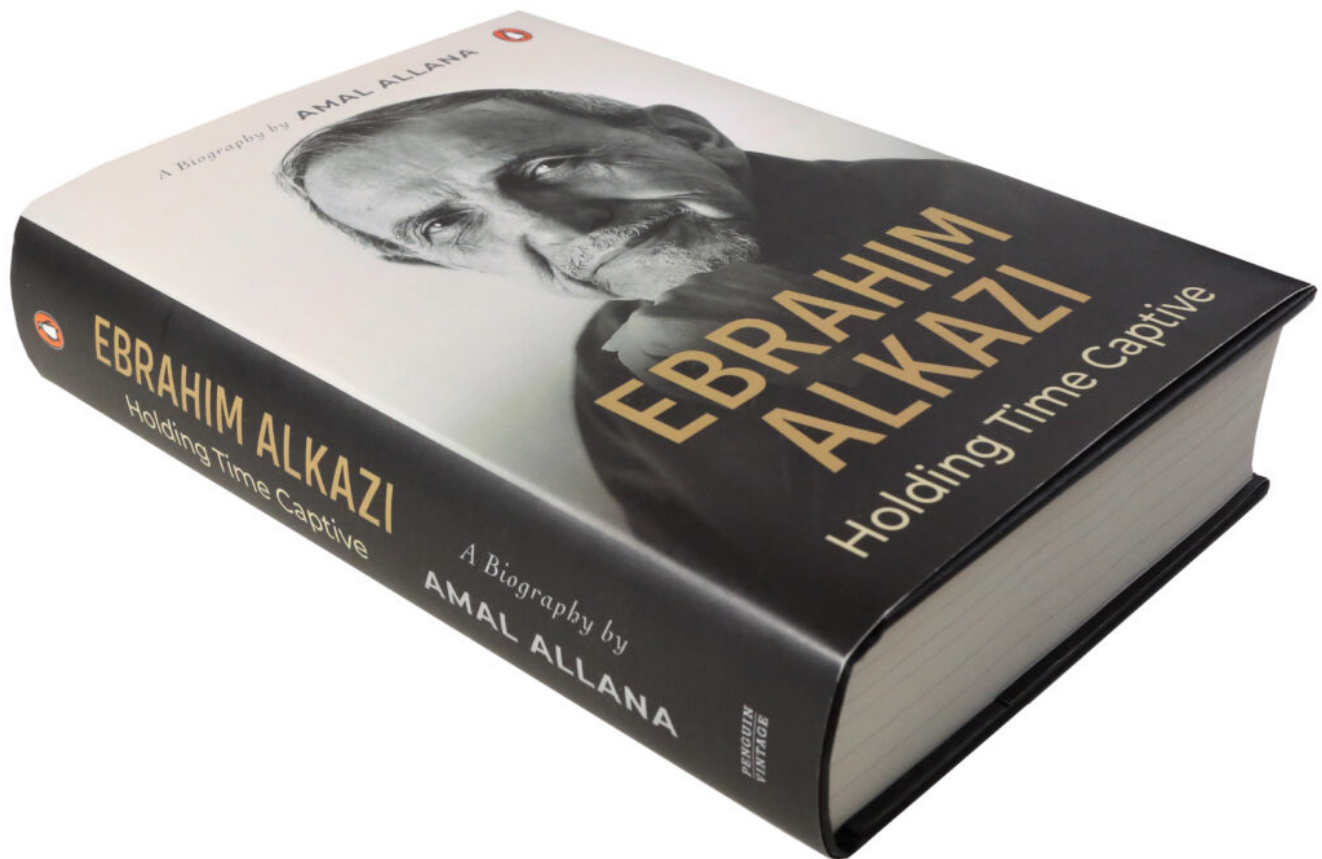
*Before I Forget* is a testament to Raina's dedication to his craft and cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict.

**— PARINASH KHUSHALANI**

**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

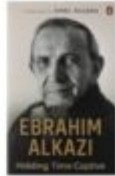
**BOOK LAUNCH:** *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive* by Anam Alana (Penguin Random House, 2024)

**DISCUSSANTS:** Anam Alana in conversation with Aman F. Akhijar

**READINGS BY:** Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer

**COLLABORATION:** Penguin Random House

22 March 2024



The search and discovery of a multilayered narrative, *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive*, also rights on the life and legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi, a towering figure in 20th-century Indian theatre and visual arts. Anam Alana, 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, revered as a theatre titan 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 contributions with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group and the foundation for his groundbreaking contributions to Indian theatre.

As the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama (NSD), Alkazi revolutionized 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, assembling a nuanced portrait of the multifaceted individual. Through interviews, archival research and personal recollections, Alana, 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, moderated by Sonam Kalia, further enriched the narrative, with Alana engaging in conversation about her father's legacy and the process of writing his biography. Directed by Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer, the event added depth and resonance to the event, underscoring the irreplaceable presence in Alkazi's life and work.

The book stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a cultural icon. Alana'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.

• MADHUR KUNDHALAM

Forget me not | Ojaswini  
Trivedi



As the rays of your beam  
Transcend through our sheets  
The creases collapsing with time  
One after the other,

He, after him  
after you  
The blinding intoxicating power  
A touch, innocent, eternal  
A smile, banished, surrendered  
Will you remember that we loved?  
That we loved, despite knowing  
Knowing it won't last.  
So as long as you walk through life  
Trying to find me the "Touch-me-nots"  
Remember our macadam of broken dreams.  
A life we never lived.

A life undone  
Unfinished