

Zakir Hussain

In recent context, we lost the eternal Ustad Zakir Hussain at the age of 73 on 15 December 2024 to a condition known as "Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis". It is a chronic lung disease in which the air sacs of the lungs become bruised and fibrous, hampering the ability to exchange oxygen effectively.



Introducing Ustad Ji

Zakir Hussain Allahrakha Qureshi (9 March 1951 – 15 December 2024) was a legendary tabla player/maestro and one of India's greatest cultural icons.

He recently passed away at the age of 73 years in the US. He is widely known for taking Indian classical music to the global platform. He was the eldest son of tabla maestro Ustad Allah Rakha. He was popular and earned respect for his rare and incredible speed, capability, and creativity. He won the hearts of audiences all across the globe and across multiple cultures. Thus, he became an iconic and outstanding musician of all time.

Ustad Ji's Honors

Ustad Ji won four Grammys and the United States National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship. This award is the highest honor given to traditional artists and musicians. He is the recipient of the esteemed Padma Awards – Padma Vibhushan 2023, Padma Bhushan 2002, Padma Shri 1998, Padma Shri 1988. The Government of India honored him with the 1990 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. Consequently, in 2018, he received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship and Ratna Sadsyata. Ustad Ji had seven Grammy award nominations, with four wins, including three in 2024. The prestigious Guardian newspaper mentioned him as the most recognizable player of the tabla instrument. Also, The New York Times was amazed that the "blur of his fingers rivals the beat of a hummingbird's wings." He specialized in Hindustani Classical Music, Jazz, and Fusion. He gave his beautiful musical genius to many Bollywood movies, such as Parasmani, Muhafiz, Mr and Mrs Iyer, Parzania, and Manto.

Ustad Ji's Early Life and Education

He was born in present-day Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, on 9 March 1951 to Allah Rakha Qureshi, a tabla maestro. He attended St. Michael's High

School in Mahim and graduated from St. Xavier's College in Mumbai. Ustad Ji's works range from playing from George Harrison's 1973 album Living in the Material World and John Handy's 1973 Hardwork to being a founding member of Bill Laswell's world music supergroup Tabla Beat Science. Also, President Obama invited him to the International Jazz Day 2016 All-Star Global Concert at the White House.



The Book on Ustad Ji

Nasreen Munni Kabir compiled 15 interview sessions (each lasting around two hours) from 2016 to 2017 into a book. Finally, in the memorable year of 2018, we got

Ustad Ji's biography, "Zakir Hussain: A Life in Music." The book takes the reader through Hussain's life, from his youth to his intense training years and growth and development as a musician.

Personal Life

Zakir Hussain married Antonia Minnecola, a Kathak dancer, teacher, and his manager as well. He had two daughters from this marriage, Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi. Hussain also had two brothers: Taufiq Qureshi, a percussionist, and Fazal Qureshi, a table player.

Other Affiliations and Achievements

The Humanities Council at Princeton University called him an **Old**

Dominion Fellow. He had lived and stayed in Princeton during the 2005 – 2006 semester as a full music department professor, adding another feather to his cap. He was a visiting professor at Stanford University, which is also one of his outstanding achievements.

In May 2022, the reputed University of Mumbai granted him the honorary Doctor of Law degree for his contributions to the area of music.

- BBC said he was one of the world's greatest table players.
- Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was a true genius who revolutionized the world of Indian classical music.
- Even guitarist John McLaughlin, who performed in collaboration with Hussain in the band Shakti, went on to describe him as the king, in whose hands rhythm became magic.

Indeed, India and the world at large, have lost a rare gem!

Images sourced from Wikimedia Commons and Flickr under Creative Commons License

Canonical URL <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Canonical URL <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>

Want to stay informed and inspired? Subscribe to our blog for insightful updates delivered straight to your inbox. Explore our [website](#) for a curated collection of reference books, resources, and more – designed to fuel your curiosity and keep you ahead.