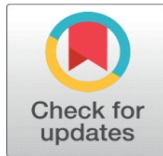
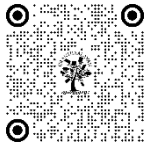


# TRIBUTE TO TABLA LEGEND ZAKIR HUSSAIN

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## ABSTRACT

An integral part of Indian Classical Music, Tabla is one of the most popular musical instruments worldwide. Because of its diversity in many other music styles, today Tabla is one of the most used percussion instruments. While the history of tabla is unknown, modern research suggests that it was invented around 1738 by poet, singer, drummer, and scholar Amir Khusro. This led to invention of a new music style called Khayal.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An integral part of Indian Classical Music, Tabla is one of the most popular musical instruments worldwide. Because of its diversity in many other music styles, today Tabla is one of the most used percussion instruments. While the history of tabla is unknown, modern research suggests that it was invented around 1738 by poet, singer, drummer, and scholar Amir Khusro. This led to invention of a new music style called Khayal.

Over the years, tabla has had various Gharanas like the Delhi Gharana, Punjab Gharana, Benaras Gharana, and the Lucknow Gharana. But do you know who all are the most loved, respected and celebrated Tabla artists in the world?

Not to worry, we bring you our favourite tabla players of all time. So, go on, read, learn and get inspired!

Zakir Hussain, born on March 9, 1951, in Mumbai, was a virtuoso tabla player who made a mark on the global level. A tabla virtuoso, Zakir was a child prodigy and started his career at the age of 12. He is the eldest son and shagird of Ustad Allah Rakha. Noted as an International Phenomenon, in 1970 he went to the United States to accompany Sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar which led to a never-ending series of concerts and performances. Zakir has performed at several music festivals and been a part of prestigious projects like *Shakti*, *Planet Drum* and *Global Drum Project* with Mickey Hart, *Tabla Beat Science*, *Sangam* with Charles Lloyd and Eric Harland. and *CrossCurrents* with Dave Holland and Chris Potter. A Grammy award winner, Zakir has been a recipient of several awards and honors like the Padma Shree and Padma Bhushan, the Sangeet Natak Academi Award, Kalidas Samman to name a few. He resided as a fulltime professor for the 2005-2006 semester at Princeton University. In 2019, he received 2 doctorates, one from the Berklee College of Music,

and the other from Indira Kala Sangit University in Khairagarh, India. Zakir does not perform at private gatherings and corporate events as he believes that **music should be the only purpose of an event**, and not a sideline.

As the eldest son of the legendary tabla maestro Ustad Alla Rakha, Hussain was immersed in the rich traditions of Indian classical music from an early age. His prodigious talent and innovative spirit not only elevated tabla to global prominence but also redefined the possibilities of percussion in contemporary music. Zakir Hussain [died on December 15, 2024](#), from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic lung disease, at a hospital in San Francisco.

## 2. CAREER AND GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS OF USTAD ZAKIR HUSSAIN

Hussain's illustrious career was marked by a relentless pursuit of musical exploration and collaboration. In 1973, he co-founded a fusion band, named Shakti, with British guitarist John McLaughlin. This innovative synthesis introduced global audiences to the complexities of Indian rhythms and melodies, establishing Hussain as a versatile and forward-thinking artist.

Throughout his career, Hussain collaborated with a diverse array of musicians across genres, including George Harrison of the Beatles. By 18, he was touring internationally and would go on to work with the likes of Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and jazz musician Herbie Hancock, as per Reuters.

Hussain's ability to seamlessly integrate the tabla into various musical contexts showcased his adaptability and deep understanding of both Eastern and Western musical traditions.

## 3. FAMOUS STUDENT'S OF ZAKIR HUSAIN

1. J.N. Dixit
2. Ravi Chaturvedi
3. Akhtar ul- Iman
4. Amit Kavthekar
5. Dayanita Singh
6. Dr. Vipin Kumar
7. Deputy Nazeer Ahmed
8. Maulvi Zakaullah

## 4. CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN CINEMA

- Heat and Dust (1983)
- The Perfect Murder (1988)
- Thanthu Vitten Ennai (1991 Tamil movie, cameo role)
- Miss Beatty's Children (1992)
- Saaz (1998)
- Zakir and His Friends (1998)
- The Speaking Hand: Zakir Hussain and the Art of the Indian Drum (2003) – Sumantra Ghosal
- Talamanam Sound Clash – Further Adventures in Hype (2003 – DVD) – Tabla Beat Science
- The Way of Beauty (2006 – DVD) – Remember Shakti
- The Rhythm Devils Concert Experience (2008 – DVD) – The Rhythm Devils
- Manto (2018)
- Monkey Man (2024)

## 5. AWARDS

- Hussain was awarded the titles of [Padma Shri](#) in 1988, [Padma Bhushan](#) in 2002, and [Padma Vibhushan](#) in 2023.
- Awarded the *Indo-American Award* in 1990 in recognition of his outstanding cultural contribution to relations between the United States and India.
- Presented with the [Sangeet Natak Akademi Award](#) in 1990 by the [President of India](#), making him one of the youngest musicians to receive this recognition given by the [Sangeet Natak Academy](#), India's National Academy of Music, Dance & Drama.

- In 1992 *Planet Drum*, an album co-created and produced by Hussain and Mickey Hart, was awarded the first-ever Grammy for *Best World Music Album*, the Downbeat Critics' Poll for *Best World Beat Album* and the NARM Indie Best Seller Award for a World Music Recording.
- Recipient of a 1999 *National Heritage Fellowship* from the *National Endowment for the Arts*, the United States government's honour for a master in the traditional arts, presented by *First Lady Hillary Clinton* at the *United States Senate* on 28 September 1999.
- In 2005, he was named an *Old Dominion Fellow* by the Humanities Council at *Princeton University*, where he resided for the 2005–2006 semester as full professor in the music department, teaching a survey course in Indian classical music and dance.
- Recipient of the *Kalidas Samman* in 2006, an award for artists of exceptional achievement, from the *Government of Madhya Pradesh*.
- *Golden Strings of the Sarode* (Moment! Records 2006) with Aashish Khan and Hussain was nominated for a *Grammy* in the *Best Traditional World Music Album* category in 2006.
- In 2007, readers' polls from both *Modern Drummer* and *Drum!* magazines named Hussain *Best World Music* and *Best World Beat Drummer* respectively.
- On 8 February 2009 for the *51st Grammy Awards*, Hussain won the Grammy in the *Contemporary World Music Album* category for his collaborative album *Global Drum Project* along with Mickey Hart, Sikiru Adepolu & Giovanni Hidalgo.
- On 23 February 2012 for *Guru Gangadhar Pradhan Lifetime Achievement Award* at Konark Dance & Music Festival, organised by Konark Natya Mandap
- Summer of 2016, he was nominated for President's Medal of the Arts, however, new rule stated non-Americans could not receive the medal.
- On 18 January 2017, *San Francisco Jazz Center* gave Hussain a Lifetime Achievement Award.
- In 2019, *Sangeet Natak Academy*, India's National Academy of Music, Dance & Drama, honored Hussain with the Academy Fellow award, also known as the Academy Ratna, for the year 2018.
- In 2022, he was conferred the honorary Doctor of Law (LLD) degree for his exceptional contribution in the field of music by *Mumbai University*.
- On 17 June 2022, he was named by the non-profit Inamori Foundation to receive the *Kyoto Prize*, Japan's highest private award for global achievement, in the category of Arts and Philosophy (field: Music).
- On 4 February 2024, Hussain received three awards at the *66th Annual Grammy Awards*. Hussain's first win came for *Pashto*, written and recorded in collaboration with American banjo player Béla Fleck, American bassist Edgar Meyer and Indian flautist Rakesh Chaurasia. Hussain's second Grammy of the night was for Best Contemporary Instrumental Album, which he won alongside Fleck, Meyer and Chaurasia, for the eclectic classical-meets-jazz album, *As We Speak*. His third win of the night came for the album *This Moment*, the critically acclaimed comeback of the pioneering world-fusion band Shakti.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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