

Ebrahim Alkazi

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Theatre director Ebrahim Alkazi, who revolutionised Indian theatre and was the longest serving director of the National School of Drama, has passed away. Alkazi was remembered for his contribution towards modern Indian theatre, including bringing in technical aspects of the craft and making the NSD the premier training institute for theatre.

Legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi

In his tenure as director of NSD from 1962 to 1977, he mentored students who went on to become great actors, including Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri. Everybody remembers him as the **father of Indian theatre**. He was the **first person to bring regional language plays to NSD**, he built a strong institutional structure and brought Indian theatre to the world.

Among the over 50 plays he directed were **Girish Karnad's Tughlaq and Dharamvir Bharati's Andha Yug**. Alkazi, who **founded the NSD Repertory Company**, was not only a renowned director, he was also a great administrator who would inspect students' hostels and teach classes, making his tenure as director "the NSD's golden years". Andha Yug was staged in 1963 when India was still reeling from the loss to China. Alkazi's **decision to explore the moral dilemmas of war** in a play set on the last day of the Mahabharata war was extremely pertinent to the times.

Alkazi hailed from an Arab family, with a keen interest in arts. When he came to Mumbai from Pune to attend university, he met Sultan "Bobby" Padamsee—Alyque Padamsee's elder brother—and became involved in his Theatre Group. **The set that Alkazi belonged to embodied the spirit of a nation on the cusp of independence**. There was a constant dialogue and cross

pollination of ideas between visual and performance artists. In 1948, he headed to England to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Even though he won laurels for his work there, Alkazi returned to Mumbai, infused with a new zeal to do a different kind of theatre.

It was in the 1960s, **with Alkazi that Hindi drama became a phenomenon.** He staged Oedipus Rex (1964), King Lear (1964) and Moliere's The Miser (1965) in Hindi. Yet another significant contribution was **bringing out of theatre from the closed proscenium to the open vistas. He transformed monuments such as Ferozshah Kotla and Purana Qila as backdrops** for plays.