Roopram's SULTANA DAKU (Nautanki) Director: Devendra Sharma

Playwright: Roopram

Director: Devendra Sharma

Group: Brij Lok Madhuri, Uttar Pradesh

Language: Hindi

Duration: 1 hr 30 mins

The Form

Before the advent of Bollywood, Nautanki was the biggest entertainment medium in the villages and towns of northern India. Nautanki's origin lies in the *Saangit, Bhagat*, and *Swang* musical theatre traditions of Northern India. Nautanki

performances are operas based on popular themes derived from romantic tales, mythology, or biographies of local heroes. The performance is often punctuated with songs, dances, and skits, which serve as breaks and comic relief for the audience. The pleasure of Nautanki lies in the intense melodic exchanges between two or three performers, and at times a chorus. Traditional Nautankis usually start late at night, often around 10 p.m. or so, and go on all night until sunrise the next morning (for a total of 8–10 hours).

The Play

Written in the 1920s by Roopram, a writer of Natharam Gaud's Nautanki troupe, this Nautanki is the story of Sultana, the famous dacoit of early 20th century. ***Sultana Daku***, the 'benevolent dacoit' is an equivalent of England's Robin Hood, who steals from the rich and gives to the poor with the help of his gang of three hundred dacoits. Sultana's love was Phoolkanwar, a *tawaayaf* (dancer), who lived with him in the jungle. The present Nautanki portrays that ironically, Sultana was betrayed by a poor person, whom he helped with money.

The Director

Dr. Devendra Sharma is a Professor of Communication and Performance at California State University, USA. Dr. Sharma introduced and popularized Swang-Nautanki in America and Europe. He was trained in the famous Samai-Khera Gharana by his father guru Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma, and in film direction at University of Southern California (Cinema School). Dr. Sharma has been invited as a professor of media and communication, and to perform, direct, and produce musical theatre shows at renowned institutions such as the University of Oxford, University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Columbia University, Cornell University, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, and University of Texas -Austin. In 2010, he was invited by the world-renowned Théâtre du Soleil in Paris,

France to train French actors in Nautanki. In 2012, he was a visiting professor and Director-in-Residence at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune.

Guru

Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma is a living legend of Swang, Bhagat, Nautanki, Rasiya, and Raaslila musical theatre traditions of north India, and is the present guru of Samai-Khera Rahasdhari Gharana. He is a famous singer, composer, actor, writer, director, and has performed more than 2000 shows all over the world. Panditji has been a visiting professor of Nautanki at the National School of Drama for more than three decades, and has taught music at many universities. In addition to numerous other awards, Panditji was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Nautanki by the President of India in 2015.

The Group

Brij Lok Madhuri (BLM) was founded by Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma in 1970s. It has been invited by various institutions such as Sangeet Natak Akademi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and Tara Arts London. Led abroad by Panditji's son, Dr. Devendra Sharma, it has performed at prestigious venues like Théâtre du Soleil, Paris; School of Oriental and African Studies, London; Counter Pulse, San Francisco; Inner Eye Foundation, San Ramon; Mondavi Center for the Arts, California; Hindi Sangam, Portland, and also in various top universities of the world. For more than four decades, it has collaborated with organizations like United Nations Program for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), etc.

Cast & Credits

Sultana Daku: Devendra Sharma

Sadhu: Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma

Phoolkunwar: Sharvari Deshpande

Mr. Young: Vishnu Sharma/Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma

Kavi/Ranga: Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma/Vishnu Sharma

Dakiya/Seth/Comic: Kishan Swaroop Pachori

Pradhan: Guddu

Abul Qasim/Deputy: Manish Bawa/Ashish Kumar Sharma

Sundari/Bedhini/Mahila: Patra Lalita, Kavya Mishra, Dolly Sharma, Anu Singh

Daakus/Munim: Jatin Sharma, Manish Bawa, Nathilal Yadav, Ashish Kumar Sharma

Dakiya Ka Beta: Kavi Sharma

Harmonium: Hari Singh

Nakkar: Matol

Dholak: Rasheed

Clarinet: MadanLal

Costume: Krishna Sharma

Make-up/Property: Sadhna Sharma

Management: Sahitya Sharma /Ashish Kumar Sharma

Playwright: Roopram

Guru & Music Director: Ram Dayal Sharma

Director: **Devendra Sharma**