JainendraDost’s Play: Bhikhari Naama

Playwright & Director: Jainendra Dost
Group: Bhikhari Thakur Repertory, Chhapra (Bihar)
Language: Hindi & Bhojpuri
Duration: 1 hr 15 mins

The Play
Bhikari Nama is a musical play based on Bhikhari Thakur’s life and his contribution to theatre. The play is broadly divided into four parts, each exploring one phase of his life. The first part presents his childhood, seamlessly moving into the section exploring his youth where Bhikhari Thakur narrates his life and talks about his marriage and his migration to Bengal in search of livelihood. He continues to work as a barber, his caste profession, in Bengal and also takes a keen interest in the Ramleela performances. Not too long after that, he returns to his village and starts putting up Ramleela performances. The next segment shows how Bhikhari Thakur goes on to set up his own theatre troupe, writing plays that go on to be wildly popular.

Director’s Note
As a researcher and director, I was amazed by the expertise in his work despite him being formally uneducated, and the way he worked behind the scenes. Ranchandra Manjhi, Shivlal Bari and Lakhichand Manjhi, three seasoned performers from Bhikhari Thakur’s original troupe, were a great support and it was with their guidance that I started the study of Bhikhari’s biographical songs, the play Naayi-Bahar, and the Bhikhari Thakur Shanka Samadhan. After this, I began collecting stories and events from Bhikhari’s life, right from his birth to when he created the Naach group. These were then re-assembled in chronological order before being made into a written performance text. The real challenge here was to think of the

form that would best reflect the multifaceted artist's work and life. We found the answer in our very own Launda Naach tradition. We weaved together songs, music, dance, drama and comedy in a documentary theatre form. The play
uses purbi, nirgun, doha, choubola and many other folk singing traditions in a theatrical form which highlight the cultural, sociological, and economic facets of Bhikahri Thakur's life.

The Director & Playwright

Jainendra Dost is the founding director of Bhikhari Thakur Repertory and Research Centre. He studied theatre at the Department of Dramatics and Film Studies (MGAHV, Wardha). He also pursued a PhD in the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He completed his PhD thesis on the Launda Nach tradition, focusing on Bhikhari Thakur's invaluable contribution to the form, this year. He has directed more than fifteen plays and many folk musical programs, and his theatre company has been invited to international theatre festivals in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal where it performed successfully. Recently Jainendra made a documentary film on Bhikhari Thakur's life and theatre performances, Naach Bhikhari Naach, with the support of Doordarshan and Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT). The film has been screened at film festivals in the country and abroad, and has received much appreciation.

The Group

Bhikhari Thakur Repertory Training & Research Centre is dedicated to the study and research of folk theatre traditions. Traditional actors who were trained and worked under the guidance of Bhikhari Thakur himself are an integral part of this repertory. The collective has performed at famous national and international festivals. The eldest member and artist of the Bhikhari Thakur Repertory, Ramchandra Manjhi, received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2017. In the same year, the repertory and Sangeet Natak Akademi of India also

organized an event, Bhikhari Thakur Theatre Centennial Celebration, at Bhikhari Thakur’s birth place, Kutubpur, and also in Chhapra (Bihar).

Cast and Credits
Sutradhar Jainendra Dost
Pyari Sundari/Singer Sarita Saaz
Story Teller/Singer Ramchandra Manjhi
Story Teller/Singer Lakhichand Manjhi
Story Teller Shiv Lal Bari
Harmonium Jaleshwar Mali
Dholak Bharat Thakur
Jhaal Raghu Paswan, Ramchandra Manjhi Chhote
Tabla Rahul Kumar
Chorus Priyanka Kumari, Gauri Shankar, Brijnath Singh

Light Shiv Kumar
Light Assistant Vivek Kumar
Set Ramlakhan
Property Naresh Gautam
Make-up Ankita Chaudhry
Music Design Sarita Saaz
Backdrop Design Dipti Ogre
Production Manager Nashim Ahmad
Stage Manager Ranjeet Kumar Ram

Script, Design &Direction Jainendra Dost

Contacts
Bhikhari Thakur Repertory
Vill: Ramnagar, Near Railway Crossing,
P.O. Sandha, Chhapra, Bihar- 841301
M: +91 9560695145
E: dostjai@gmail.com