‘Badi Bua Ji’ and ‘Aadhi Raat Ke Baad’ Explore Two Distinct Worlds of Theatre



New Delhi: Theatre has the power not only to entertain but also to question social conventions, expose contradictions and

encourage audiences to look at familiar realities from a different perspective. This was evident in the double-bill presentation of **‘Badi Bua Ji’ and ‘Aadhi Raat Ke Baad’**, organised by **Drishyam Trust** on 4th November, 2026 at Alliance Française de Delhi under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture. Written by two eminent playwrights, **Badal Sarkar and Dr. Shankar Shesh**, respectively, the productions explored contrasting theatrical worlds, moving from family relationships and social satire to questions of justice, morality and institutional contradictions.

Both plays have an established history of earlier stage productions and have been interpreted by different theatre practitioners over the years. Their presentation under the direction of **Sampa Mandal** therefore offered an opportunity to revisit these familiar works through a fresh directorial approach. **Shikha Arya** served as the assistant director.

‘Badi Bua Ji’: Humour with a Satirical Edge

Translated by **Pratibha Agarwal**, Badal Sarkar’s *Badi Bua Ji* uses humour and satire to examine family dynamics, generational differences and deeply rooted social conventions. Beneath its amusing situations lies a commentary on changing attitudes and the conflict between traditional beliefs and contemporary thinking. The inclusion of circumstances from the world of theatre and the lives of its practitioners adds another interesting dimension to the narrative.

The challenge in staging a comedy of this nature lies in maintaining the rhythm of dialogue, timing and the natural interaction between characters. The effectiveness of humour depends not merely on comic situations but also on the performers’ ability to create spontaneity and establish a convincing rapport on stage.

Khushboo Singh, as Anu, and **Aishwarya Bhardwaj**, as Badi Bua Ji, played the central characters. They were supported by Shiva Goonj, Khushvendra Singh, Shekhar Panwar, Shiva Singh, Mohammad Sirajuddin, Ayushi Patnaik, Anil Maurya, Sachin Gupta, Shyam Sundar, Shrirag M.S., Swapna Das, Daksh Sharma, Aksh Verma, Kiran Sharma and Mohit Kumar, among others.

‘Aadhi Raat Ke Baad’: A Dramatic Exploration of Justice and Morality

In sharp contrast, *Aadhi Raat Ke Baad* by **Dr. Shankar Shesh** shifts the theatrical experience towards a more serious and thought-provoking territory. Built around the confrontation between a judge and a thief, the play raises questions about the relationship between law and justice, individual morality and social responsibility. **Its strength lies in the ideological conflict between the two principal characters**, which challenges the audience to reconsider conventional perceptions of crime, punishment and justice.

The play goes beyond the immediate circumstances of its characters and brings into focus the contradictions inherent in the social and judicial systems. Does the law always represent justice? Can an individual’s actions be judged without considering the circumstances that shape them? These questions give the play a continuing relevance and make its central conflict meaningful even for contemporary audiences.

Sachin Kumar portrayed the judge, while **Gagan Chaudhary** played the thief. Anil Maurya appeared as the thief’s reflection, and Shamshad Ali played the journalist. With a limited cast and a dialogue-driven structure, the production depended considerably on the actors’ ability to communicate the underlying ideological tension. In such a play, the impact of performance lies not simply in delivering lines but in conveying the psychological and moral complexities beneath them.

Two Plays, Two Distinct Directorial Challenges

From a directorial perspective, **the two plays presented Sampa Mandal with distinctly different theatrical challenges.** While *Badi Bua Ji* required an engaging rhythm, comic timing and coordinated ensemble performances, *Aadhi Raat Ke Baad* demanded a controlled dramatic atmosphere and sustained intellectual engagement.

Bringing these contrasting works together in a single programme also offered audiences an opportunity to experience two important dimensions of theatre — **entertainment with a satirical edge and drama that provokes critical reflection.**

The technical team contributed to the overall stage presentations. Rahul Sen handled lighting, while Saif Ali Khan was responsible for set design. Ayushi Patnaik looked after costumes. Music for *Badi Bua Ji* was composed by Shiva Goonj, while Mohammad Sirajuddin handled the music for *Aadhi Raat Ke Baad*. Kiran Sharma and Shivam managed the props for the respective productions. Tinku Kumar was responsible for video, Gagan Chaudhary and Khushvendra Singh handled photography, and Gagan Chaudhary also designed the posters and brochures.

Global Cultural Leader Mohit Madhav and **senior theatre director Shyam Kumar** were present as chief guests on the occasion.

Revisiting Established Classics Through a New Directorial Lens

Taken together, the two productions offered a contrast in theatrical expression. While *Badi Bua Ji* approached social realities through humour and satire, *Aadhi Raat Ke Baad* invited audiences to engage with deeper questions of justice

and morality.

Since both plays have been staged previously, the significance of revisiting them lies in how each new director interprets their original ideas and gives them a distinct stage identity. Sampa Mandal’s presentation brought these two established dramatic works together, creating an evening that moved between laughter, social observation and serious reflection.