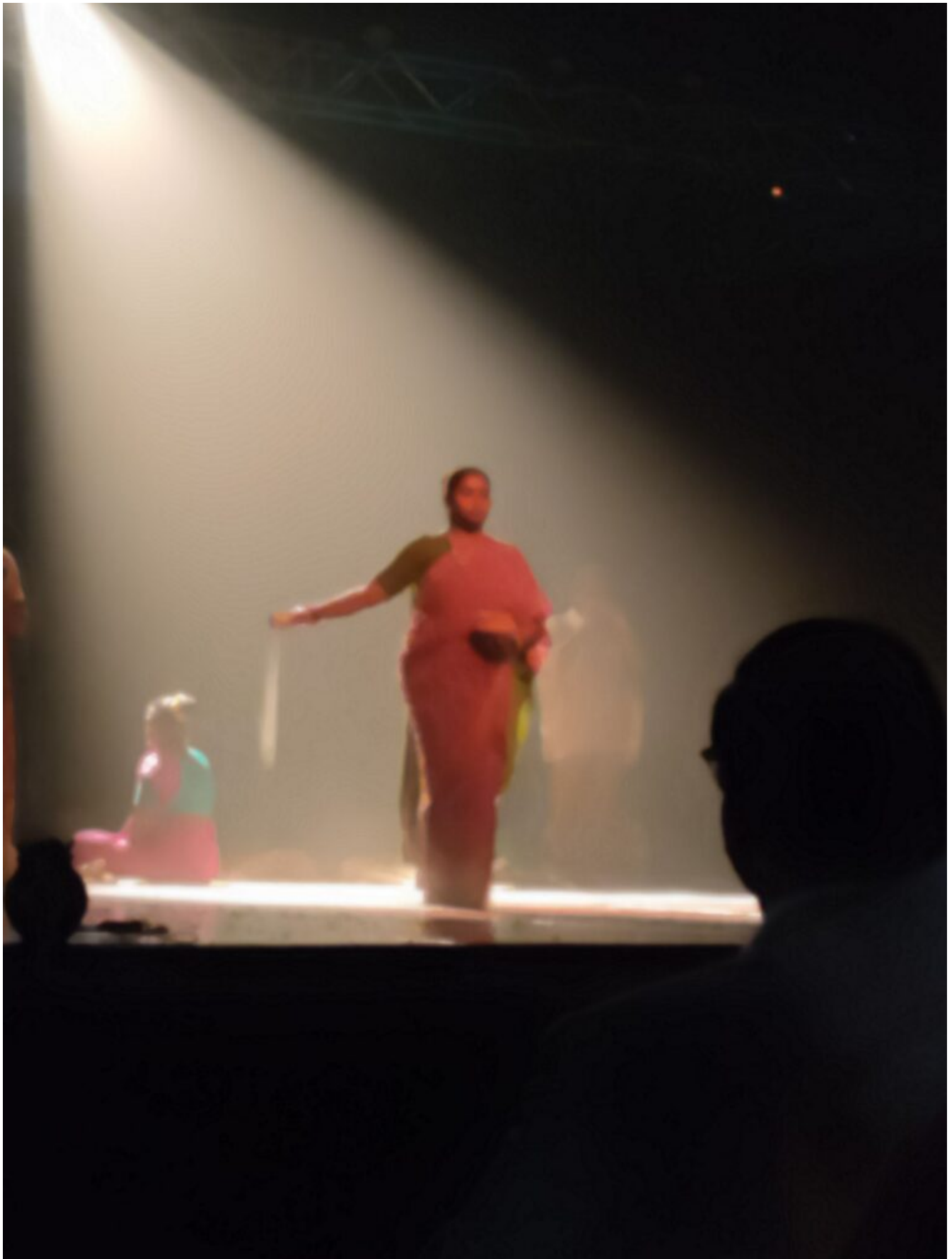


# **Dakṣakatha      Devikavya      – Provoking and Contemplative**



**A review by Manohar Khushalani for IIC DIARY**

Daklakatha Devikavya is an open ended play performed in an engagingly

informal folk style, evolved from the epic poetry and stories of K.B. Siddaiah's .

It was Directed by Lakshman K.P. It presents the inner workings and external experiences of the Daklas – a Dalit community.

*Presented by Jangama Collective, Bengaluru with Bindu Raxidi (Dakla Devi, Kadiramma); Santhosh Dindgur (Dakla, Cheluvaiah)l; Bharath Dingri (K.B. Siddiah & narrator); Narasimharaju B.K. (Narasappa); and Ramika Chaithra (Gangavva, Munivenkatamma)*

*Accompanists who also added tone and tenor to the performance were: Poorvi Kalyani & Skanda Ghate (vocal); Bharath Dingri (tamate); and Narasimharaju B.K. (arevadya)*



### The Flower Sellers

*The setting of the play had **flower sellers** squatting in the background and rising in turns as actors with robust voices. The traditional Folk device, a half curtain, known as, **Yavanika**, was used to introduce the important characters. The actor would peep over the curtain which was lowered after he started speaking or singing.*



### The Traditional Yavanika

The most important aspect of the performance was that it retained the spiritual richness of the Dakla community, through its music. Two of the characters appear on the stage playing tamate (hand drum) and arevadya (urmi), instruments not seen in contemporary theatre. Daklas are people who are protected by the untouchables and hence are still lower in the social hierarchy. But whatever notions people have about Adivasis or Daklas being a backward community, better revise them forthwith. First of, the female roles were done by women and not female impersonators. These women unhesitantly lighted beedis, and were not coy about

using cuss words,  
which is true to their life. It is also true of contemporary  
OTT films, which claim  
to be more modern and truer to our life.

The author had a strong faith in mysticism as exemplified by  
his poetry which  
was the soul of the performance:

*O mother as you rock the world  
And rock the child  
Bear me again in your womb  
Walk this infant from the cave of your vagina  
Into the cave of contemplation.*

Here in the above context the poet brings out that once the  
mother bears him  
in her womb the stigma of untouchability will not be so  
strong. One recurring  
metaphor that has remained constant is hunger. The poet throws  
a direct  
question to the creator:

*O God! Take birth like me  
Then  
Try to touch and be polluted!  
Try to take like me, like me take birth!*

Untouchability does not generate self-pity in the play, in  
fact it is an instrument  
of self-awareness and enlightenment. Sheer magic was created  
in the dark  
night by luminous display of improvised spinning fire wheels  
urns with radiant  
charcoal cinders. All elements in the play contributed to an  
experience of a  
magical night to remember.

Watch the entire play on You Tube:

## Provoking and Contemplative

**PLAY:** *Daklakatha Devikavya: An Experimental Play Drawing from the Epic Poetry and Stories of K. B. Siddaiah's Selected Writings*

**DEvised AND DIRECTED BY:** Lakshman K. P.

**PRESENTED BY:** Jangama Collective, Bengaluru with Bindu Raxidi (Dakla Devi, Kadiramma); Santhosh Dindgur (Dakla, Cheluvaiah); Bharath Dingri (K. B. Siddaiah & narrator); Narasimharaju B. K. (Narasappa); and Ramika Chaithra (Gangavva, Munivenkatamma)

**ACCOMPANISTS:** Poorvi Kalyani & Skanda Ghate (vocal); Bharath Dingri (tamate); and Narasimharaju B. K. (areye)

**2 November 2023**

*Daklakatha Devikavya* is an open-ended play performed in an engagingly informal folk style, evolved from the epic poetry and stories of K. B. Siddaiah. It presents the inner workings and external experiences of the Daklas—a Dalit community.

The setting of the play was flower sellers squatting in the background and rising in turn as actors with robust voices. The traditional folk device, a half curtain, *yavanika*, was used to introduce the important characters. The actor would peep over the curtain which was lowered after he started speaking or singing. The most important aspect of the performance was that it retained the spiritual richness of the Dakla community through its music. Two of the characters appeared on stage playing *tamate* (hand drum) and *urumi* (hourglass drum), instruments not seen in contemporary theatre. Daklas are people who are protected by the untouchables and hence are still lower in the social hierarchy. But whatever notions people have



about Adivasis or Daklas being a backward community better revise them forthwith. First, the female roles were played by women and not female impersonators. These women unhesitatingly lighted beedis, and were not coy about using cuss words, which is true to their lives. It is also true of contemporary OTT films, which claim to be more modern and truer to our lives.

The author had a strong faith in mysticism, as exemplified by his poetry, which was the soul of the performance.

*O mother as you rock the world  
And rock the child  
Bear me again in your womb  
Walk this infant from the cave of your vagina  
Into the cave of contemplation.*

In the above context, the poet is saying that once the mother bears him in her womb the stigma of untouchability will not be so strong. One recurring metaphor that has remained constant is hunger. The poet throws a direct question to the creator:

*O God! Take birth like me  
Then  
Try to touch and be polluted!  
Try to take like me, like me take birth!*

Untouchability does not generate self-pity in the play; in fact, it is an instrument of self-awareness and enlightenment. Sheer magic was created in the dark night by the luminous display of improvised spinning fire wheels and urns with radiant charcoal cinders. All elements in the play contributed to a magical night to remember.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

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# Voicing Gender Fluidity

Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya at IIC

A review by **Manohar Khushalani** First Published in IIC Diary



**Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya**, is an annual feature at IIC. This year, they presented dramatized readings, *Beyond Gender*, on LGBTQ communities, from two plays: **Satish Alekar's 'Begum Barve'** & **Mahesh Dattani's 'Seven Steps Around the Fire'**. It was brilliantly and imaginatively directed by **Sohaila Kapur**, who has a knack for choosing very powerful and relevant themes. Six actors read the two plays. The event began with a mesmerising dance by Kaustav Ghosh, doing the role of Begum Barve, the female impersonator. The performance was also interspersed with carefully curated soulful marathi music played in the background.

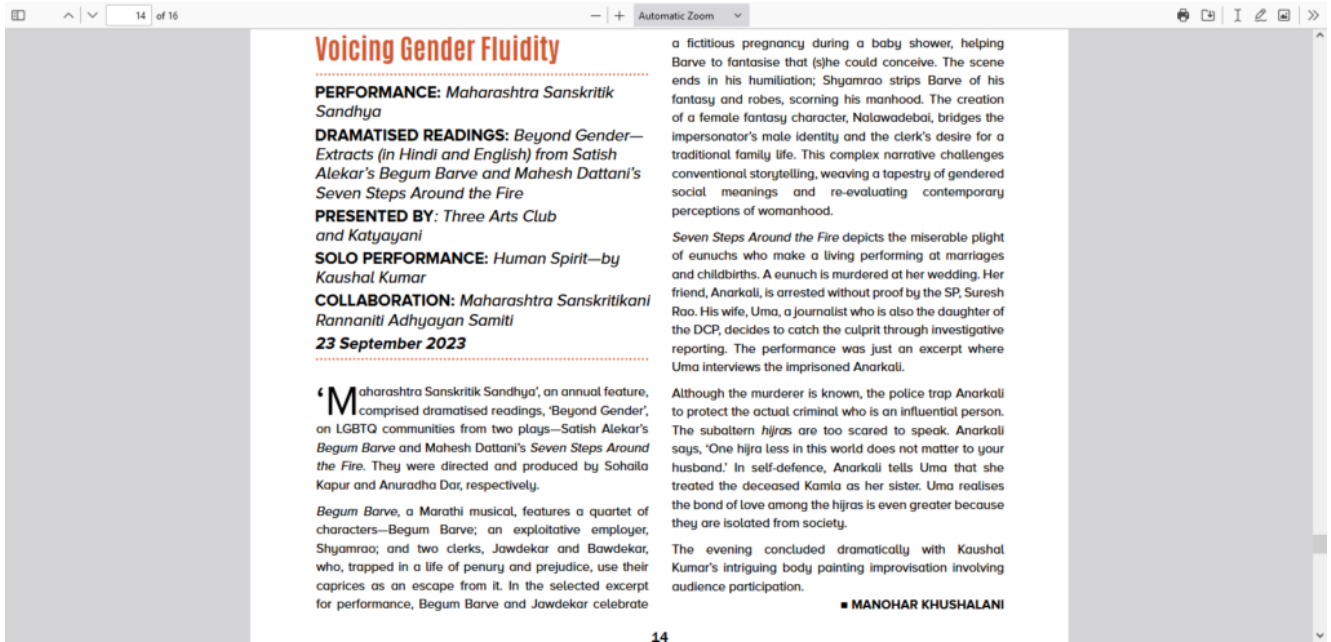
**Begum Barve**, the Marathi musical, features a quartet of characters: Begum Barve, an exploitative employer, Shyamrao, and two clerks, Jawdekar and Bawdekar, who, trapped in a life of penury and prejudice, use their caprices as an escape from it. In the selected excerpt for performance, Begum Barve and Jawdekar celebrate a fictitious pregnancy during a baby shower, helping Barve to fantasize that (s)he could conceive. The scene ends in his humiliation, **Shyamrao** strips **Barve** off his fantasy and robes and scorning his manhood. The script explores the intertwining of fantasies and reality through the creation of a female fantasy character, Nalawadebai, bridging the impersonator's male identity and the clerk's desire for a traditional family life. This complex narrative challenge's conventional storytelling, weaving a tapestry of gendered social meanings and re-evaluating contemporary perceptions of womanhood.



**Seven Steps Around the Fire**, depicts the miserable plight of eunuchs who make a living performing at marriages and child births. A eunuch is murdered at her wedding. Her friend, Anarkali, is arrested without proof by the SP, Suresh Rao. His wife Uma, a journalist, who is also the daughter of the DCP, decides to catch the culprit through investigative reporting. The performance was just an excerpt where Uma is interviewing the imprisoned Anarkali.

Although the murderer is known, the police traps Anarkali to protect the actual criminal who is a powerful person. The subaltern hijaras are too scared to speak. Anarkali says, "They will kill me even if I tell the truth. If I don't tell the truth, I will die in jail." The dramatist shows how the murder of Kamla has terrified other hijaras that they cannot reveal the truth and cannot get justice for the dead soul. Anarkali says, "One hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband.". In self-defense, Anarkali reminds Uma, that she treated the deceased Kamla as her sister. Uma realises the bond of love among the hijaras is even greater, because they are isolated from society.

The event was introduced by Suhas Borkar, Trustee IIC. It was concluded rather dramatically by Kaushal Kumar, a fine arts university professor with an intriguing body painting improvisation involving audience participation.



Seasoned With Humour: Ajib  
Dastan Hai Ye!



**Ajib Dastan Hai Ye!**

**A Review by Manohar Khushalani**

Originally published in IIC Diary

Wings Cultural Society presented, at IIC, Ajib Dastan Hai Ye, which was a collection of two dramatised soliloquies, in Urdu and Hindustani, that lampooned the absurdities of human behavior. The humour was created because of the imaginative craft of the authors, and the punctuated timing with which actors narrated the tales.

Bey is a hilarious anecdote penned by Shaukat Thanvi about a gullible protagonist who is warned by Tripathi, an astrologer, to beware of the Urdu alphabet 'Be' as his impending death will be caused by it. Thus begins, the narrator, Rajguru Mohan's, roller coaster ride to avoid anything and anyone remotely connected to this alphabet, only to discover, that the whole universe was nothing but 'Be'. It included objects he handled, his family members, friends and even strangers he came across. This first performance had the audience in splits and set the pace for an equally well paced and uproarious next performance

True to the style of the production of investigating comic text through soliloquies, the performance of Patras Bukhari's, Marhoom Ki Yaad Mein was engagingly delivered by Tarique Hameed. The tale, as told, begins with an uninspiring conversation between two friends who have known each other for decades and have said it all, so there is nothing new to communicate. To spice up the conversation, the protagonist decides to impress Mirza Sahib, by boasting that he intends to buy a motor car. Amused and knowing his limitations, Mirza advises the narrator to think more realistically about buying a humble bicycle instead, which too it appears was way beyond the narrators means. At what appears to be a bargain, Mirza offers his own bike at a steal of a price. Thus, unfolds a hilarious series of disasters, when the author discovers that he has been taken for a ride on a contraption that he can't even ride. So, ends his fantasy to be the owner of a motorcar, when he couldn't even afford to repair the antique bike, in which each part had a mind of its own

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## Seasoned with Humour

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**PLAY:** *Ajib Dastan Hai Ye!*

**PRESENTED BY:** Wings Cultural Society

**DRAMATISED NARRATION IN URDU AND**

**HINDUSTANI BY:** *Rajguru Mohan (Bey); and  
Tarique Hameed (Marhoom ki Yaad Mein)*

**25 July 2023**

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Wings Cultural Society presented *Ajib Dastan Hai Ye*, which was a collection of two dramatised soliloquies, in Urdu and Hindustani, which lampooned the absurdities of human behaviour. The humour was created by the imaginative craft of the authors and the punctuated timing with which the actors narrated the tales.

*Bey* is a hilarious anecdote penned by Shaukat Thanvi about a gullible protagonist who is warned by Tripathi, an astrologer, to beware of the Urdu alphabet 'bey' as his impending death would be caused by it. Thus began the narrator Rajguru Mohan's roller-coaster ride to avoid anything and anyone remotely connected to this alphabet, only to discover that the whole universe was nothing but 'bey'. It included objects he handled, his family members, friends, and even strangers. This first performance had the audience in splits and set the pace for an equally uproarious next performance.

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■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

A Scene from the play *Ajib Dastan Hai Ye* performed at IIC on 25th July 2023

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## ‘AFWAAH’ the Sudhir Mishra thriller opening 5th May

Rahab Ahmed, a top notch advertising professional takes an ill fated detour through his hometown and unwittingly rescues

Nivi, a political heiress running away from her father's legacy. This fateful night becomes a journey through hell as rumors run rife and social media becomes a lethal weapon.

Afwaah is a quirky thriller that explores the power of rumours in our society. Directed by **Sudhir Mishra** and produced by **Anubhav Sinha**, the film features **Nawazuddin Siddiqui** and **Bhumi Pednekar** in lead roles. The film is set to release on May 5, 2023.

Look out for this space tomorrow for a detailed analysis and review of the film by Poet, Thinker, Author: Dr. **Madhup Mohta**



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## Beastly Tales: Animal and Human Fables



Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah performing in Beastly Tales

Beastly Tales : Animal and Human Fables

A review by Manohar Khushalani

*READINGS: Beastly Tales*

*Poems by Vikram Seth with Stories by James Thurber*

*Presented by Motley*

*Recitations by Naseeruddin Shah;*

*Ratna Pathak Shah; Heeba Shah; and Kenny Desai*

*Produced by Jairaj Patil*

*17 November 2022*

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Beastly Tales was billed as readings by the well-known performers, Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah, Heeba Shah and Kenny Desai. Produced by Jairaj Patil for Motley, the heavily attended event included poems by Vikram Seth, from his book 'Beastly Tales with stories by James Thurber', TS Eliot's poems from 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats' and Robert

Browning's Legendary poem 'Pied Piper of Hamelin'. The starkly designed presentation had no bells and whistles. Led by Naseeruddin Shah, the four performers stood behind their individual lecterns and read out the poems with a flair and perfect diction. Each one read their own piece individually and sometimes, in perfect synchronisation, in a chorus.

Spiced with humour, the content of the performance was deftly curated to reflect idiosyncrasies of contemporary times with follies and foibles of its people juxtaposed against an animal world which reminds you eerily of 'Fables of Aesop' and 'Panchatantra'. The animals were near human too, but unlike the complexities we fallible folks suffer from, the cat, the lion, the tiger, the elephant, the owl were more focussed with a single idiosyncrasy each. This curious fact, along with the pulsating rhythm of the poetry delivered with a punch and an aplomb by the actors brought out the message of each piece with precision.

Let's pick a few stanzas from here and there and see for ourselves the merriness of the mirth involved.

The Tortoise, in Vikram Seth's poem, initially maintained the original story with who won the race thus:

"And the cheering of the crowd  
Died at last, the tortoise bowed,  
And he thought: "That silly hare!  
So much for her charm and flair.  
Now she'll learn that sure and slow  
Is the only way to go –  
That you can't rise to the top  
With a skip, a jump, a hop"

But here comes the twist in Seth's version, it is in fact the hare, who became the hero of the hour:

But it was in fact the hare,  
With a calm insouciant air

Like an unrepentant bounder,  
 Who allured the pressmen round her.  
 "And Will Wolf, the great press lord  
 Filled a Gold cup – on a whim –  
 And with an inviting grin  
 Murmured: "In my eyes you win."

Each of the selections had interesting, and sometimes mind blowing twists and turns, that be made you realise that, as in real life, in these fairy tales too you cannot take a happy ending for granted

First Published in IIC Diary Nov-Dec 2022

## Animal and Human Fables

### READINGS: *Beastly Tales*

Poems by Vikram Seth with Stories by James Thurber  
 Presented by Motley

Recitations by Naseeruddin Shah;  
 Ratna Pathak Shah; Heeba Shah; and Kenny Desai  
 Produced by Jairaj Patil

17 November 2022

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■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI



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# **Manohar Khushalani's Team Building Exercises**

By now you must be very excited to see the actual workshop conducted by Prof. Manohar Khushalani. Please watch the film of the actual workshop and listen to participants feedback also

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## **19th NATSAMRAT NATYA UTSAV and 14th NATSAMRAT THEATRE AWARD opens 11th March**

Natsamrat has been at the forefront of Capital's amateur theatre movement for the last 24 years, presenting entertaining and socially conscious theatre, participating in the prestigious theatre festivals and organizing every year theatre festival featuring work of leading theatre directors.

Under the inspiration guidance of its founding director Shyam Kumar, a seasoned director and actor, Natsamrat has instituted awards which are given away every year to theatre practitioners – directot, actor (male and female), playwright, backstage performer, critic, lifetime achievement, theatre promoter – of eminence.

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# **Treasure Art Gallery opens with Prabhakar Kolte's 'The Mind's Eye'**

The operative system that Kolte found for his works was in a way colour field, but fundamentally different from that of the colour field abstractionists of his time like Marc Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Clyfford Still and so on. What he made was not even remotely similar to the paintings by KCS Paniker in the south or GR Santhosh or Biren De in the north.

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## **Abstractionist Prabhakar Kolte's Exhibition, 'The Mind's Eye' opens 9th Oct**

The Preview will be followed by wine and cheese

The exhibition will be on view until 10th December, 2021.

Monday-Saturday, 11am-7pm

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# **As tributes pour in on Surekha Sikri's demise listen to her Swan Songs**

As a fitting tribute to the great performer she was we will listen to her mellifluous recitations of Hindi and Urdu Poetry. But before that, here are some of the tributes which poured in on social media and otherwise from her millions of admirers, and eminent people whom she knew, including actors and directors from film, television and theatre.