JODAE E- SARDAR- NOT A Play- AN EYE OPENER

A few sentiments often expressed non-verbally make more sense than those expressed verbally. This is true indeed but nonetheless; there are some emotions that sprout in our hearts and blossom only when they are expressed or else they hover around us making us more and more restless. Such is the power of organic art that the recipient is motivated to verbalize its effect dispensing with the requirement of diplomacy or tactic of any kind. I feel, like an unadulterated attempt with a known script based on a biography of an extraordinary leader, today's play Sardar based on Shri Vallabbhai Patel's life legacy, **Jodae – e- sardar** (Play presented by Gujarat Rajya Sangeeta Natak Akademi Gandhinagar Directed by revered theater director Manish Baradia) emerged as a spectrum of empathetic delight rousing patriotic emotions leaving behind any biased or jingoistic assertion on Indian freedom fight. The play was proudly presented by Sanskardham, an educational institution that fosters the holistic development of compassionate, innovative, and competent thinkers – Ahmedabad. The institution's effort to house the production of this play in its premises is indeed a step towards cultivating NEP 2020s virtue of ensuring that our students become empathetic citizens. It is not simply a retrieval of history that can enable the youth of today to reflect on ethical goals of life. It is reliving its essence. Jodae-e- sardar proves it.

Putting forth a strong critique of the British atrocities meted out in India during a particular time period when struggle for independence was the salient feature of the Indian nation [and hence the goal of many visionaries like Gandhi and Sardar Patel] the play nowhere forces us to psychologically or pragmatically make any attempts to imagine a decolonized India. It instead convinces us that the choice

that a leader makes at a certain time period is an outcome of the socio-political historical context and situation that has nothing to do with any cultural, social or national prejudice. Sardar is one such play that ceases to advocate any anti-British or anti-Pakistani terrain in spite of apparently propagating the majestic leader Sardar Vallabbhai Patel's anti-British or anti-Pak credence that manifested itself in the form of Gandhian Satyagraha. Comprehending the unmixed meaning of **Satyagraha as an uproar against 'injustice'** more than against 'anybody' the play becomes a mirror of the inspiring leader's journey from being a fearless lad who fiercely burns his abscess with a hot iron rod to his transformation into a colossal and formidable Sardar who fights for justice and wins the Bardoli Satyagraha.

Another striking feature the play brings forth is Sardar's education as a lawyer depended upon borrowed books from his fellow mates since he could not afford buying them, the play has it in the form of the most memorable dialogue, "The man who completed his education borrowing books from others, has his place in history books today." What a remarkable feature of his life. Perhaps many of us would not have known such a facet of the life of this praiseworthy man.

The backbone that stands with him, his wife Zaverba creates a short but an unforgettable impact with her memorable dialogue, "Jeevan na chella shwas sudhi" which acts as a strong source of Sardar Patel's sacrifice of spending his life in her memory after her death and fostering his children. What becomes noteworthy is that when he receives the news of his wife's demise, he is in a court fighting a case and chooses to execute his duty rather than getting immersed in sorrow; a very painful sacrifice.

This renunciation or sacrifice continued as Sardar decided to join the freedom struggle against the British rule, participating in each of India's major fights against the British rule boycott of the Simon commission, The Quit India

movement etc. earns respect for him as an important leader among the major freedom fighters of India. Governed by the sole objective of making the country independent, Sardar Patel finally emerges as the guardian of India when the play shows his indelible contribution in retaining India's unity in spite of the innumerable attempts to fragment India that was one of the most prominent set backs India could have witnessed after its independence.

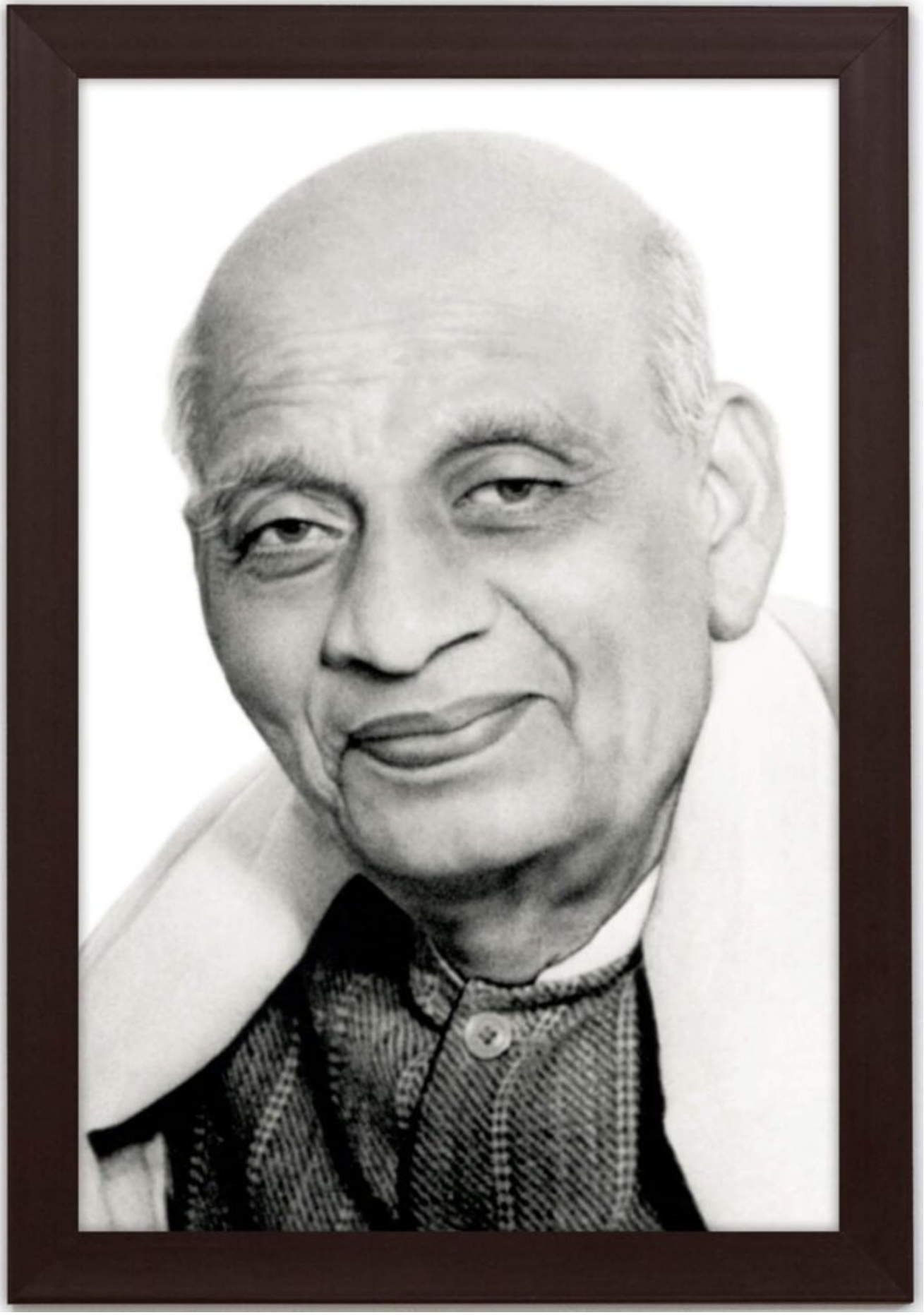
Certainly, the entire play admirably fertilizes aggression of Indian independence protests and struggle. The boycott of the British rule through the upholding of SWADESHI movement- Charkha, Khadi etc. is musically and dramatically depicted through dance instead of making it a vehement protest on the stage which could have given it a cliché appearance. The director smartly dilutes the tension of a serious subject matter through intermittent insertion of playful music and dance wherein the dancers through the bright costumes and impressive moves not only brings contemporary appeal for the youth watching the drama but also sieves the qualities of a period drama and saves it from being typecasted as a history play. Instead, Jodesardar manages to make us admire our leader who left us the priceless treasure of independence without amassing any wealth for himself. The closure of the play with his daughter's beautiful words, "aaje amari pita putri ni jodi tuti gayi' brings tears in the eyes and we surely do not regret this transition from practical people to emotional humans. This is indeed what Sardar did to me.

I profoundly realized how vital it is to relive the memoirs of those leaders who fought for truth and honesty and who enlightened the world that – Respect and love for a Nation is a matter of self-esteem and pride on our nation is our Birth right. This excludes personal interests and benefits and therefore, when Sardar Patel indubitably accepts Mahatma Gandhi's decision to have Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of India, he earns our admittance as the respected

Chairman of Sanskardham Dr. R.K. Shah rightly stated- “ Had he been chosen, the condition of our country would have been different.”

Sardar is an eye-opener and not a historical account. A Must-watch. A brilliant story, a brilliant narration, a brilliant performance text that is a paradigm of an institution in theatrical excellence. When the closure of the play speaks – When after his death, it was found that his legacy had nothing but two pairs of clothes 160 rupees and one cow, we cannot help but weep at the greatness of this man and marvel at the prudence of the director who chose such episodes from the long life of this leader that could make this play truly memorable.

Dr. Payal Trivedi



MY KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS- THE NEW AWAKENING



So, My Krishna Consciousness awakened first when I began realizing the truth that life isn’t a matter of taking pride upon our glories. It in fact is a matter of becoming aware that we have our own shortcomings. This extraordinary self-realization dawned upon me not with the aid of any saint but

with the selfless help of those people that kept hawk eye on each of my stance ready to discover my errors like an eagle that is often geared up to pounce upon its prey. It is so considerate of them to make me their priority and my tasks as the matter of their able deliberations.

I saw an extraordinary lethal weapon that my detractors began using and that was pretense – a marvelous hypocrisy that was beyond my level of comprehension which made me put my ego aside and admit whole heartedly that I could be 'foolish' to be trapped by their so-called 'goodness.' It was through their able guidance that I was illumined that Humility and humanity are my weaknesses and not my strengths and I get carried away by a show of 'nicety' and then emerges the slithering cobra out of nowhere and I am left with nothing else but regret on my gullibility that governs my pragmatic sense. The outcome is – my brain becomes susceptible to people's apparent display of values and affinity towards 'being human.' It was slowly and steadily that I came to know that what's written on T-shirts, oughtn't every time the motto of life. I would give myself a benefit of doubt that the thing instrumental in making me a simpleton was my firm faith in the repetitive statement that resounded in my ears – 'God is with those that stay true.' Little did I realize then that God does not want us to stay blind to obvious wrongs that happen in front of us and wait for his intervention in things that we are eligible to solve.
Finally, after a long period of struggle my Krishna Consciousness bloomed at the time when I arrived at a finale that was the best eye opener. I encountered that there is a herd mentality that prostrates people under the pretext of appreciating their goodness in the society and that people who are repetitively heard praising it are the ones who actually promote 'conniving' and 'conspiring' nature. The next was a flabbergasting disclosure that these people aren't villains. Instead, they are the ones who have been the candidates that have continually failed the ' goodness' test of our ALMIGHTY. And they have therefore attributed the credit of their

incessant failure to God the Great who according to them is nobody else but the self-obsessed creature of Milton's Paradise Lost' having no role but to sit on the throne and observe people in constant agony.
Thus, cunningness appears as a blessing in disguise for such people and they opt for this. It becomes the shortcut for success- Yes- the more nefarious you are, the better it is for SATAN is the Samaritan of those that 'otherwise' want to be good but have turned into rebels as they have been disregarded by the ambassador of honesty and truth- God who has proved that KALIYUGA is the abode of rogues and you ought to be one in case you want to survive- and yes- who would like to embrace death? So, all in all, the fact stood unadulterated in front of me that if in case I choose to be on this planet, I need to adopt some or the other illicit means of survival which means the following needs to be done to be successful and have your share of profit. –

1. Worship slyness, become a devotee of callous and sadistic people.
2. emulate the principles of sycophancy and selfishness discarding altruism and selflessness to the optimum level possible and you have to do all this surreptitiously under the guise of PRAGMATISM
   Thus, Hence proved it was through these kinds of experiences that rewards and merits were awarded to those that were epitomes of ' the inhumans' as that would make you flaunt yourself as 'clever.' It will be your ultimate weapon- VAJRA to win over those provocations that could possibly let goodness overtake your SMART caliber of being 'NASTY.'
3. And…the warrior in me rose. And abruptly I took an oath that 'the fault lies not within me but in them who do not value my efforts and refrain from giving me any credit and adorn the garb of celibacy while embracing the rewards of my talent.

4. But…this wasn’t my way. It was not my choice and neither was my understanding of life. I brooded over when I got a call from my colleague, “would you complete work on my behalf as my mom is passed away and I cannot come to work.” And I got to hear that my maid’s son is hospitalized as he has met with a sudden accident and that a neighbor of mine needs my help urgently as he has forgotten his keys at office which happens to be near my work place and is requesting me to fetch them for him or else he would have to travel another one hour to get them from there. And finally, I could not understand the reason I was pestered by a small little urchin on the road begging for some food in order to fill his empty stomach and much more happened with me that day when I was in the process of utter transformation from a normal organic human being to an extremely hazardous being who was about to destroy goodness in the world. And…thus I am sure, there are many who are in this catch 22 situation wherein they are on the one hand compelled to sacrifice their goodness and on the other pulled by their goodness within. And thus, I would say, the final conclusion I have been able to draw after meditating on the problem with Vishnu sahastrnamawali as my guiding principle – We may be ‘good’ but we do not have the caliber to retain our goodness because we are often bothered by the concern of being ‘acknowledged’ for it. In case, we abstain from relishing the pleasure of being crowned as the most ‘good’ human on this planet we will perhaps do a great service to humankind as we would not be provoked to do ‘bad’ because we would not bother whether we are ‘touted’ good or not. I think that is the best mode of survival in today’s increasingly selfish world. This is perhaps what we call Krishna Consciousness that enables us the vision to see how ‘wrong’ we are because we want recognition even for being ‘good.’ When we know internally ‘ how bad we can be. And how erroneous too.

5. Hare Krishna.

“Many people hear voices when no one is there. Some of them are called mad and are shut up in rooms where they stare at the walls all day. Others are called writers and they do pretty much the same thing.”— Margaret Chittenden



After months of intense cold, getting up late, sleeping in late I was left without feeling a sense of yes, I have done it, I finally today found my day restored. It was as simple as getting back to my physical space that had given me so much comfort before. I have a beautiful office, small compact and well done to suit my writing and reading habits and finally almost after eight months I went back to it. The space enveloped me with total warmth and love. I felt finally that this was I was lacking all this while. I needed to just get back to my most loved space that I had somehow neglected over the months.

All of us I am sure have beautiful spaces in our homes where we find peace, maybe just as simple as a sofa or a comfortable desk. However we often avoid going there feeling that space is redundant and no longer serves the purpose for which it was constructed. Maybe that room gives just so much grief, so we want run away from it, we refuse to enter to enter and try and

create new spaces in nameless domains. However we are yet never able to own it and hence we are at a loss. I see this as a blind refusal, a blind negation to create a new routine to back to the old one. I also see this as being thankless and to be harsh enough to say callous to a space maybe created with great love, fostered with warmth and growth of thoughts and ideas.

I would only gently nudge people to get back to disorganised spaces not because I wish them to find the keys to face their grief and remain there to be disheartened but to find new comforts. This time the new joys could be with others who wish to create a magical garden with you, each step together confident and delightful. Dear Readers, I urge you to find your comfortable magic spot at home to claim it back with the same love and care as always done before. Give it that special hug that it needs maybe with a song, maybe with a painting hung or just flowers on the desk that will always smile back at you.

Avalon’s ‘Magnum Opus’- Krishna: Where devotion embraces innocence



Avalon’s ‘Magnum Opus’- Krishna: Where devotion embraces innocence

They may not know “lights, camera, action!” They may be unaware of the complicated stirring terms, ‘spotlights, props and stage angles,’ they may not have heard of prolix ‘gestures and postures and the so-called methods of acting’ but one thing that they seem to have earnestly grasped is – ‘KRISHNA the makhanchor.’ The little children of Avalon Heights International school (Vashi – NAVI MUMBAI) displayed a savant innocent wisdom beyond compare when on the auspicious occasion of Jaya Ekadashi 8.2.2025) they presented a play (in Vishnu Das Bhave auditorium-Vashi – Navi Mumbai) on the divine endearing Lord of countless people, the one and only ‘Sri Krishna’ who resides in the hearts of his devotees like the spirit dwells in the body.

One in a million times do you see such a remarkable exhibit of excellence with the children understanding their roles with such immaculate precision that it becomes easy for the spectators to admire their cuteness mixed with their truly amazing understanding of the characters. This identification with the roles that they were playing made their performances assume appreciable quality beyond words.

From the beginning with the apt Ganeshvandana with which the tiny tots of nursery began followed by a rendition of Bhajans of Rama and Krishna, the children ideally set the platform for

this devotional play; mind it…it was not a religious drama. It was a presentation anointed with the adoration for a LORD who has been our friend, philosopher and guide since time immemorial.

The play begins with the introduction of THE ATYACHARI KANSA who is more than a villain, a demon with merciless traits. He enjoys torturing one and all. This inception sets up an ideal stage for the audiences to wait for justice. The Kroor Kansa- dances with huge strides complementing each word of the song recital that recounts his demonic character. It is done with such exactitude that it becomes almost impossible to underestimate the little boy playing the role as merely a child artist; he is the formidable, the awe-inspiring KANSA indeed!

Thus, when the actor exudes both pride and selfishness of Kansa who does not hesitate to imprison his sister and brother-in-law when he learns that their 8th son would be responsible for his death, it becomes highly credible for the audiences. Moreover, the next scene where Devaki and Vasudeva's marriage is being interrupted by an Akashvani or the divine forecast and Kansa imprisons both of them, the play gives us the reason that at times, evil does become indomitable and all we need to do is to wait for the Lord to restore Dharma and destroy the invincible evil.

Followed by the same is the birth of Krishna in jail transported by Vasudeva to Nandbaba's house wading through the powerful and thunderous Yamuna overflowing due to the tumultuous rain. The children make it sublime with the snake-God entering and providing a shade on to the newborn Krishna until he is deposited safely to Nandbaba's home. When he carries the newborn yogamaya to Mathura in Kansa's domain and she manifests herself as the omnipotent Goddess informing Kansa about the birth of Krishna.The presentation becomes awe-inspiring with the same being telecasted as an audio-visual

representation on the stage.

The BALLILAS of Krishna become the highlight of the play. Pootnas…both pretty and ugly become the show stoppers! The unparalleled wickedness they bring in their dialogue recital and body language is what I found the most unbelievable! Especially, pretty putana's vicious facial expressions and admirably cute gajagamini walk, certainly hypnotic. Another exciting feature was the choice of the song for introducing Pootana. The song said it all! She was insanely cruel and devilish and the small little girl dancing wildly aped the scariness ingrained in the song so well that she almost manifested the demoness in front of the eyes. Her destruction comes as a pleasant relief as she comes twirling around from behind a tree with the baby Krishna on her chest whining in pain. Beautifully executed! Followed by this is Krishna killing the other demons sent by Kansa. The story is displayed with the use of dance-dramatic presentation and adds echoes the ancient Indian theatrical tradition of sangeeta natya.

The Lila's or magical deeds of the slightly grown-up Krishna bring an incredible glory to the play. We want to sing in praise of the Lord when Yashodamaiya becomes witness to his immensely powerful all-encompassing form wherein he shows himself as the master of the universe by opening his small mouth as his mother scolds him on eating mud. This scene, once again depicted using the audio-visual form appears majestic on the screen. Furthermore, the introduction of Krishna as the natkhat butter thief, makhanchor forming a human pyramid and stealing butter from the houses of the Gopis brings a smile on our face when the little girls in their glittering costumes and jewelry walk through the stage adjusting their ghaghras and uttering their dialogues so adorably "Yashoda, tere gharme makhan ki kami ho toh keh dena, aur bhijwa doongi." And, the tiny Yashoda maiya looks equally attractive with her colorful blue and golden apparel and trinkets, especially the elongated nose ring that makes her look exactly as we conceive

Yashodamaiya in all her glory. Her astonishment on listening to the complains of the Gopis about her Lalla- (her son) seamlessly convinces us that a mother can be both, stringent as well as benevolent at the same time. The same is the preaching that we hear as the child playing Lord Vishnu appears on the stage standing inside his lotus throne and saying, “Ma ke pyar ki koi seema nahi hoti…apni maa ki daant ka bura nahi manna chahiye.”

Krishna, destroying the Kaliya Naga- the dangerous snake of Yamuna and saving the lives of the brijvasis as well as his avatara as Govardhandhari who demolishes the vanity of the majestic Indra sitting on his airavat (the elephant) and challenging the prowess of the Lord indeed appears admirably grand. The scenes have been conceived with such theatrical skill that one hardly wants to reckon that it is just an enactment with artificial cut outs of the venomous Kaliya snake and Indra’s elephant far from being real. Similarly, Govardhan Parvat made artistically out of the available props by the art team of the school appears real on the stage not because it is designed with any special technical adjustments but simply because the little Krishna who seems to be holding it on his little finger seems to be the resurrector of the entire humankind; what an aplomb and style does the boy portray the scene with! It is more than a wonder…it is something that only someone who is truly blessed by the Lord himself can execute with such confidence!

The play gives a rewarding treat to the eyes parallelly with Radha and Krishna’s extremely honorable adoration. Radha’s first visit to Krishna’s abode during his birthday and her offering him a rose as a gift is the introduction of the innocence ingrained in their love that is unmatched with the worldly feelings of love. As Krishna receives the rose fondly and treats it as supreme among all other gifts, the scene entrenches purity and divinity of true love in the human world. Followed by it is the beautiful dance rendition that

displays the celebration of this lovely pair Radha and Krishna. The play does not bring the rasalila or Krishna's divine dance with Radha and the gopis but this dance serves to be an apt delegate of the same.

Kansa Vadha or the slaying of Kansa is kept very simple. Kansa invites Krishna for a mallayuddha or a duel and first Krishna destroys his attendants and later he kills Kansa. Though the scene has nothing spectacular apparently, the finale steals the heart. How beautifully does the scene imbibe Krishna's philosophy, 'Your Karma' is responsible for what you endure in life.' As he kills Kansa, Krishna makes him remember every evil deed of his and finally destroys him. Kansa is shown to have realized his mistakes and dies. The death of Kansa is the death of the vice and the evil that consume humanity. Vishnu thus appears and gives a loud and clear message making the spectators brood over whether they would like to choose the path of dharma or endure a fate like Kansa by choosing to do evil; the choice lies with the people. Vishnu's concluding lines are evidence of the fact that we have the freedom to decide the way we want to shape our life. Thus, the play does not give any fixed doctrine of dharma despite Krishna being the ambassador of righteousness. It retains the beauty of Lord Krishna's endeavors to make people own their deeds and be ready to accept the outcome.

The play ends with the death of Kansa but we are not contented and we want more as it closes it generates a greed – of Krishna's eventual journey towards the *Mahabharata* and his most serene preaching of the Bhagwadgita. It is only because performance of the children keeps resounding in our minds that we do not want to accept the closure so easily.

Overall, from Kansa's loud voice projection that echoed peril in the entire auditorium to Pootna's heightened cruelty to Indra's unrelenting presumptuous attitude, to Devaki and Vasudeva's poignant emotional outburst, to the little Narada's pleasing rhythmical NARAYAN NARAYAN, to Yashoda maiya and Nand

Baba’s sober motherly and fatherly affection, to the gorgeous Radha’s lovely love, to the staid akruraji’s serious expressions that were enough to convey Krishna must not go to meet Kansa – each actor appeared fully immersed in one’s role. Such inseparable oneness with one’s role is doubtlessly an achievement par excellence. The supporting dancers who entered intermittently all decked up with dazzling apparels and make-up on the stage served to enhance the aesthetic splendor of the production. The lights were aptly managed and the amazing backstage duty doers who appeared after each black out on the stage adjusting different props for every upcoming scene did a commendable job; after all it was not easy to show the change of place so easily without a circulating stage. The only one thing that could have been taken care of is that the backstage prop adjustors could have appeared in Indian costumes and that would have made the overall appearance of the play organically ‘Indian.’

On today’s auspicious occasion of ‘Jaya Ekadashi’ Avalon’s presentation made this religiously special occasion truly special. The play was indeed a treat to the eyes. Ms. Aarti Patt’s hard work and dedication to her craft is truly visible; together the music and dance team excel in their creation. A must watch!

Dr. Payal Trivedi

For comments if any, please write it the comment box given below:

A HAMLET IN THEATRE

Prose



Its only a hamlet that we all wish to create. A sense of familiarity. a sense of being totally one and open with all, a place where no judgements will be announced and where all will be accepted with open arms. If that home can be integrated with art, music or theatre, an occupation that all are artistically involved in it will give much more meaning to our lives. We have heard of co-living spaces and co offices why no cultural hamlets. I have seen and heard of many artists who have reached their senior years of 55 plus wanting to create that for themselves. They all not only wish to create a co habitual place but are already in the process of doing so where the entire team meets almost on a daily basis, eat talk laugh joke and create a sense of shared belonging.

I personally also toyed with the same idea however I realised that I was not capable of carrying the mantle of keeping the whole group together. Perhaps I did not have the band with or perhaps the interpersonal skills needed to keep everything and everyone tied to my core. My core I seem to have kept distant as mine and others as others. It is difficult for me then to

function as I have no member universally available into my core and people came and left. So many came and left I have forgotten many and I kept on directing plays with teams of actors almost like teaching schools. Yes I miss the ideas of theatre groups with members and fun but I don’t know if I am even ready to take on that challenge. I lead an insular, hermit like life and my hamlet keeps to me alone.

I am here defending those who are keeping their hamlet in theatre for they are never alone nor truly lonely (though I despite not keeping a hamlet am not lonely). Those who keep homes within the discipline of theatre always seem to be there for each other and enjoy all moments of good or bad while I have my own hidden world within all the noise. I wish all the home creators only the best as they are providing safe zones to all who will to participate and be within them. The hamlet in theatre is a ready, comfortable, warm space that needs to be lauded and appreciated.

Theatre as an Academic Discipline



I have heard many times why should a theatre person continue in his academic life when he already has a degree in performance and why should we even read a book, is not acting enough? My answer is all that is you are wrong to discount academic pursuit's in a performative genre. The value is exceedingly high. I have always maintained a life of both a performer and an academician as I know that this will give me inroads to both worlds. Whenever I decide to take a break from pure performance I immediately settle into the life of an academician, I read and write papers attend conferences and create a parallel world where discourse, debate and decisions are made in a different vein. I seem to enjoy attending the conferences many times online where I meet a totally different set of people with different set of ideas and placed in different set of circumstances. The best part is I am able to make new friends and enjoy a new head space where I am able to read theoretical books on topics like feminism, globalisation, neoliberalism which are equally exciting.

Drama students hence must be encouraged to go beyond the

script. If the engage with the material that makes a space in their heads they will truly be able to become a totally developed individual. The day the drama schools of India encourage academic papers also to be written and published by the students a new chapter will emerge in theatre and drama studies. We all will be able to talk in a new language and engage in strong academic discourses that will also put us in a category of other disciplines like history, political science or philosophy. Let us only unite in joining with our fellow academic brothers and sisters and make sure that theatre is a vivid discipline beyond its vibrant performances.

Kala Sankul's Seminar Unites India's Diverse Folk Traditions



A monthly art seminar was organized on 27 October 2024 at the ‘Kala Sankul’ of Sanskar Bharti, Delhi, in which a unique confluence of India’s cultural diversity and unity was seen. Padmashree Ramdayal Sharma ji, who is a reputed Nautanki artist and guru, was present as a special guest in this program.

The program started with the lighting of the lamp where Sanskar Bharti’s Rashtriya Sangathan Mantri Abhijeet Gokhale, Ashok Tiwari, Digvijay Singh, Padmashree Ramdayal Sharma, Shyam Kumar, Raj Upadhyay, Deputy Registrar O.P. Sagar, Shruti Sinha were present.

The program started with captivating presentations of various folk dances, in which Manya Narang, Divya Kumari, Lavanya Sinha, Avya Tiwari and Katha Vachika Ruhi Jaiswal, under the leadership of Ms. Sneha Mukherjee, presented the folk dances of Rajasthan and Haryana in a very lively form. After this, Ms. Prabha Dubey’s group Rashmi Singh, Pooja Tripathi, Vaishnavi, Akshit Pratap Singh, Durga Bashakh, Jyoti Sharma, Gargi Savaria, Nitya Bansal, Bhavya Bansal and Megha Jain mesmerized the audience by presenting a unique amalgamation of Garba, Dandiya and Bengal’s Dhunuchi dance.

Padma Shri Ramdayal Sharma Ji in his speech highlighted the antiquity of Nautanki and its Indianness. He told that Nautanki is basically an expression of religious and Indian consciousness, and maintaining its purity is the need of the hour. Initially, Nautanki art was known as Swang and Bhagat.

In earlier times, there was no stage art without Indian consciousness. If the sufferings faced by King Harishchandra for the truth are shown through art, then the new generation will have Indian consciousness.

The program was conducted by Garima Rani Ji, while the vote of thanks was presented by Shruti Sinha Ji. This seminar emerged as a symbol of Indian culture, folk art and national unity, in

which art teachers, researchers and art lovers participated in large numbers. Raj Upadhyay, Shyam Kumar, Pradeep Pathak, Raman Kumar, Aanchal Kumari, Tarushi, Anjali Kumari, Sakshi Sharma, Saurabh Kumar, Harshit Kumar, Raman Kumar, Brajesh Vishwakarma, Satyam Kumar along with the manager of the Kala Sankul Digvijay Pandey, Mrityunjay Kumar, Sushant contributed to making the program successful.

Gulammohammed Sheikh's Kaarwaan and Other Works

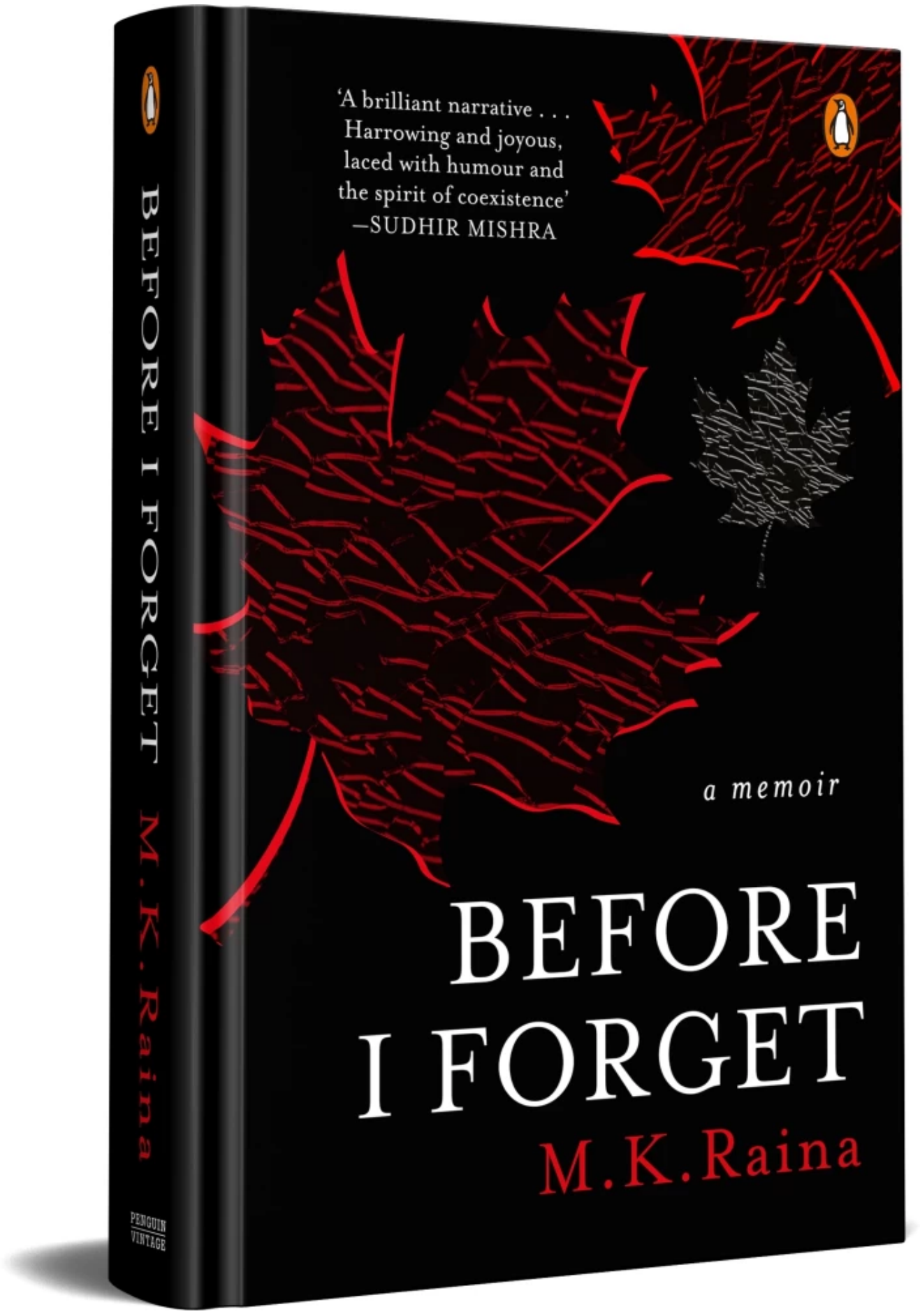
Images, information, and narratives from memory, of the lectures delivered by Gulammohammed Sheikh for our art history courses in Baroda form into a display of artworks at the exhibition Kaarwaan and Other Works

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An Unforgettable Book Discussion Conducted by Sujata and Oroon

Conversations: Before I Forget

Reviewed by **Manohar Khushalani**



M.K. Raina's memoir, "Before I Forget," is a deeply moving chronicle of his multifaceted life as a theatre actor,

director, and cultural activist. The memoir weaves through various stages of his life, from his serene childhood in Kashmir to his influential role in Delhi's theatre scene, and his poignant experiences during the turbulent periods of Kashmir's history. At IIC,



Sujata Prasad and Oroon Das, conducted an extremely engaging and memorable conversation with the author.

His narrative began with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Sheetal Nath Sathu Mohalla, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace, and his nurturing education at Lal Ded Primary School. This nostalgic recounting provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

The core of Raina's memoir focuses on his efforts to use

theatre as a tool for social change and healing. Despite the insurgency and violence in regions like Kashmir and the North-East, Raina set up theatre workshops aimed at reviving folk traditions and fostering community spirit. His work often put him in danger, yet he persisted, driven by a cause greater than activism—a belief in mending the fabric of society. One of his significant achievements was the successful theatre workshop in Kashmir in 2000, where he taught young locals not just theatre, but values of rationality and responsibility.

Raina's reflections on the political and cultural history of India are profound. He recounts witnessing turbulent times, the Emergency period, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Delhi riots, and the death of playwright Safdar Hashmi. These events are narrated with a historian's precision and a poet's sensitivity, capturing both the joy and sorrow of living through India's tumultuous times.

The memoir delves deeply into the traumatic period of the 1990s in Kashmir. Raina's mother's illness during the violence-ridden winter. Amidst curfews and security checks, he navigated the challenges of getting medical care for his mother, only to face the heartbreak of her passing. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits during this period is another painful memory, highlighting the erosion of centuries-old communal bonds.

Raina's narrative does not shy away from the complexities and mistrust that grew among communities: How even brothers became strangers, emphasizing the profound impact of fear. His return to Kashmir in the 2000s to conduct theatre workshops marked a significant effort to rebuild trust and revive cultural practices like the traditional folk theatre, Bhand Pather.

Raina balances personal anecdotes with broader socio-political observations. His encounters with cultural luminaries in Delhi, such as Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, and Om Puri, are interspersed with reflections on the decline of the city's

once-vibrant theatre scene

“Before I Forget” is a testament to M.K. Raina’s unwavering dedication to his craft and his cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict. His declaration, “We should never forget but always forgive”

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A Rich Tapestry of Events and Anecdotes

TALK: *Before I Forget*

CONVERSATION BETWEEN: M.K. Raina, Sujata Prasad, and Oinam Das

COLLABORATION: Ahad Ashaq

29 May 2024

M.K. Raina's memoir *Before I Forget* is a deeply moving chronicle of his multifaceted life as a theatre actor, director and cultural activist. The memoir weaves through various stages of his life, from his serene childhood in Kashmir to his influential role in Delhi's theatre scene, and his poignant experiences during the turbulent periods of Kashmir's history.

His narratives begin with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Shivratri Nath Sathu mohalla, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace, and his nurturing education at Lal Ded Primary School. This nostalgic recounting provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

The core of Raina's memoir is his efforts to use theatre as a tool for social change and healing. Despite the insurgency and violence in regions like Kashmir and the northeast, Raina set up theatre workshops to revive folk traditions and foster community spirit. One of his significant achievements was the successful theatre workshop in Kashmir in 2002, where he taught young locals not just theatre, but values of rationality and responsibility.

Raina's reflections on the political and cultural history of India are profound. He recounts witnessing turbulent times, the Emergency, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Delhi riots of 1984, and the death of playwright Sahbar Hashmi. These events are narrated with a historian's precision and a poet's sensitivity, capturing both the joy and sorrow of living through India's tumultuous times.

The memoir delves deeply into the traumatic period of the 1990s in Kashmir and Raina's mother's illness during the violence-ridden winter. Amidst curfews and security checks, he navigated the challenges of getting medical care for his mother, only to face the heartbreak of her passing. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits during this period is another painful memory, highlighting the erosion of centuries-old communal bonds.

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Before I Forget is a testament to Raina's dedication to his craft and cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict.

• RANGHARI KHUSHALANI

World’s largest literature festival concludes



Einstein World Records gives certificate of achievement

The last day was dedicated to the differently abled writers

More than 850 children of Delhi NCR More took part in the programme ‘Aao Kahani Bune’

New Delhi, 16 March 2024: The Festival of Letters 2024, which is being organized by Sahitya Akademi as the world’s largest literature festival, concluded today. The last day of this six-day festival was dedicated to differently abled writers. To provide national platform to differently abled writers All India Differently Abled Writers’ Meet was organized. To awaken interest in literature among children many competitions were organized for more than 850 children at the programme ‘Aao Kahani Bune’. Today’s other important programmes included “Symposium on the Life and Works of Gopi Chand Narang”, “Translation in a Multilingual, Multicultural Society”, “Preservation of Indian Languages”, “Translation as Rewriting/re-creation in the Indian Context”, “Indian English Writing and Translation”. Apart from this, the ongoing

national seminars on “Indian Oral Epics” and “Post-Independence Indian Literature” also concluded.
Considering this six-day festival as the world’s biggest literary festival, today the team of Einstein World Records, Dubai, presented the certificate of a world record in ceremoniously to Sri Madhav Kaushik, Prof. Kumud Sharma and Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, respectively President, Vice President and Secretary, Sahitya Akademi. The certificate mentions the participation of more than 1100 writers in 190 sessions in this world’s largest literature festival that lasted six days and over 175 languages were represented. Delivering the inaugural address at the inaugural session of the All India Differently Abled Writers’ Meet, renowned English scholar Prof. G.J.V. Prasad said that we have to work with awareness and affection in connection with the differently abled. Disability is not congenital but many times we acquire it due to our own ignorance and carelessness. He requested all the differently abled writers to identify their special abilities and work on them, they must achieve their destination. In her presidential address, Vice President of Sahitya Akademi, Prof. Kumud Sharma, while discussing the achievements of the differently abled people in various fields, said that the differently abled people will have to move forward with the energy and courage, only then they will be able to achieve their desired destination.
At the beginning of the inaugural session, Sahitya Akademi Secretary Dr. K. Sreenivasarao while giving the welcome address said that Sahitya Akademi is feeling proud to have differently abled writers from 24 Indian languages present here today. Remembering the great writer and critic Gopichand Narang, a symposium was organized on his literary contribution. The chief guests of which were Sri Gulzar and Narang ji’s wife Manorama Narang. Sri Gulzar in his inaugural address said that the personality and work of Gopi Chand Narang is a beautiful combination of his talent and greatness. The key-note was given by the eminent Urdu scholar Nizam Siddiqui. Sadiqur Rahman Kidwai delivered his speech as the

special guest. Sahitya Akademi President Madhav Kaushik presided over. Introductory remarks were made by Sri Chandra Bhan Khayal, Convener of the Urdu Advisory Board. Important writers and scholars who participated in these programmes were – Harish Narang, Damodar Khadse, Anvita Abbi, Rita Kothari, K. Enoch, Debashish Chatterjee, Udaya Narayana Singh, Mamang Dai, Sukrita Paul Kumar, Shafe Kidwai, Shamim Tariq.

(K. Sreenivasarao)