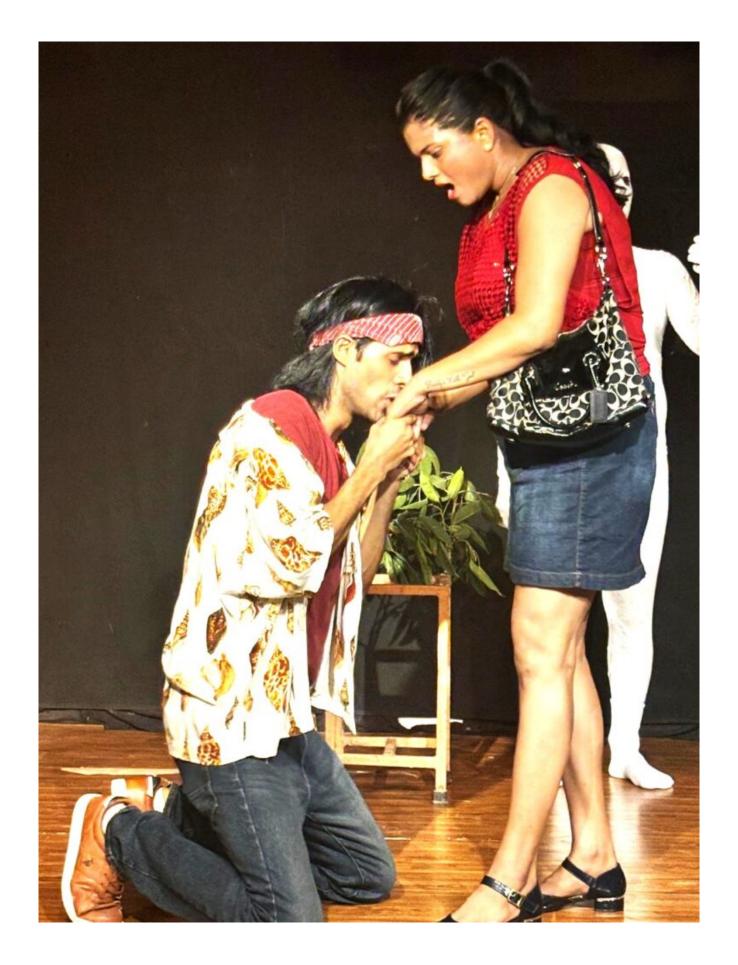
"Prem-Parinde": A Tale of Changing Social Values in the Name of Love



On August 4, 2024, Mask Players Art Group performed the play "Prem-Parinde" at the Rangparivartan Auditorium in Gurugram.

Written and directed by Chandrashekhar Sharma, the play delves into the modern trend of forming romantic relationships without understanding their depth, turning it into a social pressure for today's youth. This phenomenon is leading to crimes in the name of love and causing familial disintegration. Additionally, social media is exacerbating the situation, with students prioritizing creating reels over building their future.

The play conveys its serious message in a humorous manner. The main character, Nisha, is a fan of a superstar and is so obsessed with movies that she lives her life in a cinematic way. This obsession leads her to fall in love with Rajan, a loafer who resembles a superstar, and she even finances his expenses. Their movie-like love story reaches a point where they realize they have only been deceiving each other under the guise of love and don't truly understand what love is.

The roles were well-portrayed by Pooja Singh as Nisha, Ashish Sharma as Rajan, Rakesh Sharma as the father, Hansika Jain as the wife, and Parth Srivastava as Bhola. The actors' timing was impeccable, adding to the entertainment of the audience. Behind the scenes, Nikhil Jha handled the lights and Mayank Sharma managed the music, both contributing significantly to the success of the presentation.

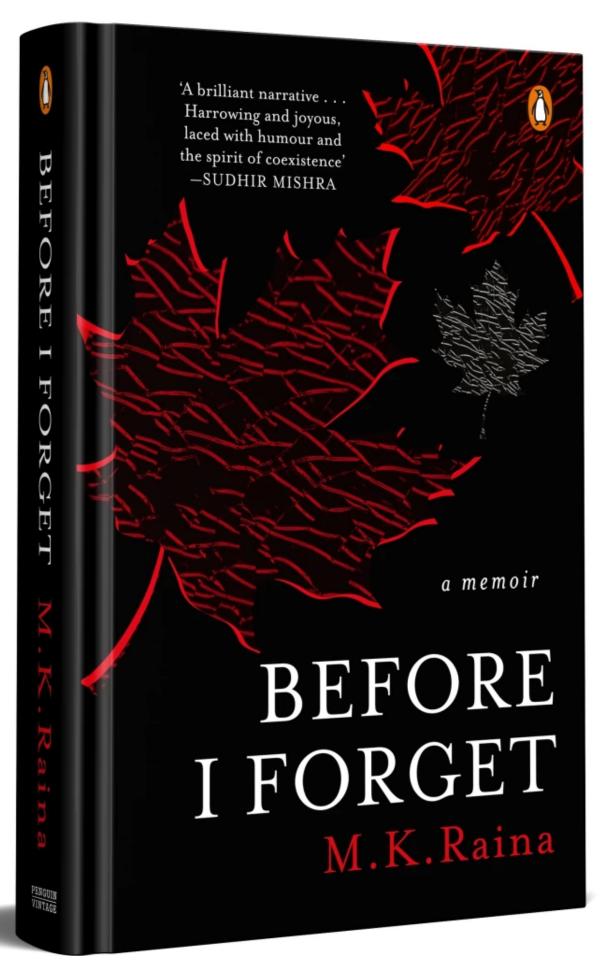
The play, while tickling the audience's funny bones, conveyed a profound message relevant to today's youth.

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

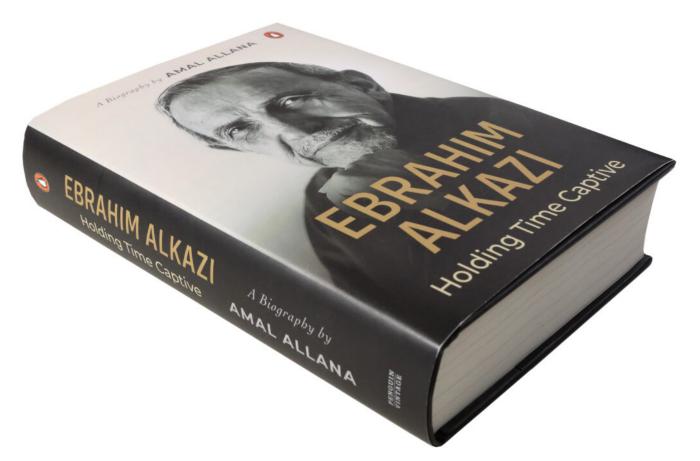
"Before I Forget" is a testament to M.K. Raina's unwavering dedication to his craft and his cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict. His declaration, "We should never forget but always forgive"

First Published in IIC Diary April-May 2024



Ebrahim Alkazi: An uninhibited scholarly Tale of a Towering Thespian

Review by **By Manohar Khushalani**



The launch and discussion at the India International Centre (IIC) of a multilayered narrative, "Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive," shed light on the life and legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi, a towering figure in twentieth-century Indian theater and visual arts. Amal Allana, Alkazi's daughter, presents a meticulously researched account of her father's life, offering insights into his role in shaping the cultural landscapes of Mumbai and Delhi from the 1940s to the 2000s.

Ebrahim Alkazi, renowned as a theater doyen and pedagogue, passed away at the age of 94, leaving behind a monumental legacy in Indian theater. His career spanned an impressive 74 years, during which he directed iconic plays such as Girish Karnad's "Tughlaq" and mentored generations of actors, including Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri. Alkazi's upbringing, education, and early associations with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group laid the foundation for his groundbreaking contributions to Indian theater.

As the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama, Alkazi revolutionized Hindi theater with his visionary

approach and technical precision. His establishment of the Repertory Company and the School of Dramatic Arts showcased his commitment to nurturing talent and promoting theatrical excellence. Beyond theater, Alkazi's influence extended to the visual arts, as evidenced by his founding of the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi with his wife, Roshan Alkazi.

Allana's biography not only celebrates her father's professional achievements, but also delves uninhibitedly into his personal life, providing a nuanced portrait of a multifaceted individual. Through interviews, archival research, and personal recollections, Allana, herself a renowned and celebrated theatre director, offers readers a glimpse into Alkazi's emotional journey and his profound impact on modern Indian cultural history.

The discussion at the IIC, moderated by Naman Ahuja, further enriched the narrative, with Allana engaging in conversation about her father's legacy and the process of writing his biography. Dramatic readings by two actors, Sonam Kalra and Rehaan Engineer, added depth and resonance to the event, underscoring the theatricality inherent in Alkazi's life and work.

Overall, "Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive" stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a cultural icon. Allana's narrative, both enthralling and critically astute, pays homage to Alkazi's monumental contributions while situating him within the broader context of modern Indian cultural history.

First Published in IIC Diary February-March 2024



Symposium on "Bharatmuni's Natya Shastra — Tradition and Experimentation" with Professor Bharat Gupt



New Delhi, July 28, 2024: The "Bharatmuni's Natya Shastra — Tradition and Experimentation" symposium, hosted by Sanskar Bharati's 'Kala Sankul,' was graced by the presence of renowned classical artist and theater theorist Professor Bharat Gupt. His insights on the significance and deep aspects of ancient Indian theater added great value to the event.

In his address, Professor Gupt highlighted the crucial elements of ancient Indian theater. He remarked that while the British sought to revive Indian drama through European theatre during the Islamic period in India, Indian historians have not done justice to the native dramatic traditions. He also

expressed concern that successive governments since independence have largely ignored the importance of drama.

Professor Gupt questioned why, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, there is no memorial for Bharatmuni, the father of Indian theatre, despite India having one of the oldest theater traditions in the world. He praised the linguistic integration in ancient Indian dramas as a unique example of Indian tradition and lamented the lack of due respect due to conflicting historical narratives among scholars.



He stressed the need to unify the two streams of Indian tradition—ancient and urban—and underscored the significance of linguistic integration in theatre. The symposium saw participation from students, professors, playwrights, and theatre practitioners who discussed the necessity of innovation in drama.

Sanskar Bharati 'Kala Sankul' organizes monthly symposia on various subjects like music, dance, folk dance, literature, and visual arts on the last Sunday of each month. These symposia, held at the Kala Sankul on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, review and discuss the challenges and integration of Indian

art perspectives.

The event was attended by notable artists such as Padma Shri Ram Sutar, Padma Shri Ranjana Gauhar, Bharatanatyam dancer Rama Vaidyanathan, Flutist Pandit Chetan Joshi, Jayaprabha Menon, Abhay Sopori, Meenu Thakur, and Professor Chandan Chaubey.

The success of the symposium was attributed to the efforts of the organizing team, including Coordinator Kuldeep Sharma, Advisor Raj Upadhyay & Shyam Kumar, Assistant Coordinator Raman Kumar, Anjali Kumari, Sujata Kumari, Saurabh Kumar, Shruti Sinha, Vishwadeep, Sakshi Sharma, and Dr. Prashant Upadhyay, Brajesh Bhatt, Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, Brijesh, Shivam, Vijendra and Mani Kumar.

Prominent theatre artists, playwrights, directors such as Professor Chandan Chaubey, Delhi University theater critic Lokendra Trivedi, Senior Social Worker Khulna Sahni, theater director Rohit Tripathi, J. P. Singh and Chandrakanta Tripathi were also present. The symposium was successfully conducted by Garima Rani.



National Drama Festival in Rohtak Showcases Diverse Plays and Talents



Rohtak. Five different plays are being staged in the five-day National Drama Festival organized by Haryana Institute of Performing Arts Rohtak, Pathania World Campus, Zad Global School and Department of Art and Cultural Affairs Haryana. The play "Popcorn" directed by Kedar Thakur of Shimla and written by Ashish Pathak, the play Kambakht Ishq directed by Shyam Kumar of Delhi and written by Satya Prakash Darwa, "Sandhya Chaya" directed by Sunil Chauhan of Delhi and written by Jayant Dalvi, the play "Saiyaan Bhaye Kotwal" directed by Vishaw Deepak Trikha of Rohtak and written by Vasant Sabnis and the play "Bonus Show" directed by Kajal Suri of Delhi and written by Aziz Qureshi will be staged.

The second evening of the five-day National Drama Festival was dedicated to the presentation of Natsamrat Delhi's 'Kambakht Ishq'. In this play directed by Shyam Kumar, the truth and essence of the life of the elderly was depicted in a very interesting way. This presentation full of humor tickled the audience a lot.



The plot of the comedy drama Kambakht Ishq revolves around two elderly people for whom their children do not have time. Due to the busy life and lack of love from children, the elderly try to attract the attention of children in the guise of love. The children's problems increase when both the elderly people fall in love with each other and start meeting secretly.

The drama was successful in giving the message that people forget that 'a true companion is needed the most in old age, to share one's feelings.' This problem and the struggle of loneliness in old age was seen in this presentation with a touch of laughter.

The actors presented the story of the drama in a very interesting manner and received a lot of applause from the audience. Sanjay Basliyal in the role of Kishan and Munmun in the role of Radha won everyone's heart with their excellent acting. PK Khyal in the role of doctor, Aman Kumar in the role of Jai, Shivangi in the role of Leela and Raman Kumar as

compounder also impressed. Sunil Rathore and Rohit Prasad were the stage managers while Suraj and Lokesh took care of the stage material. Make-up was done by Rajrani and costumes by Payal. Music direction was done by Vansh Rathore and lighting design was done by Natsamrat director Shyam Kumar.



Memorable Plays Staged at Natsamrat's '5th Mumbai Theatre Festival'

The 5th Mumbai Theatre Festival organized by Natsamrat was successfully held from 21st to 23rd June at Creative Adda Auditorium, Versova, Mumbai. The director of all the plays is Shyam Kumar.



On the first day of the Theatre Festival, 21st June at 7 pm, the play Satya Prakash's "Kambakht Ishq" was staged. This play explained deep themes while making the audience laugh. The story revolves around Jai's father Kishan and Leela's mother Radha, who face loneliness due to their children's busy schedules. They meet at a clinic and start spending time together, which alleviates their loneliness. However, their children misunderstand this relationship and prevent them from meeting, causing both to fall ill again. Eventually, the children realize their parents need each other's support.

Later that evening at 8:30 pm, the play "The Proposal" written by Anton Chekhov was staged. This play tells the story of a young man proposing marriage to his neighbor's unmarried daughter. The story becomes more complicated as they argue over property and dogs.

On June 22, at 7 pm, "Haye Mera Dil" written by Ranbir Singh

was staged. This play depicts the story of a hypochondriac husband who, due to a misunderstanding, believes he is going to die soon. He plans a wedding for his wife, but she mistakes his behavior for infidelity.

At 8:30 pm, the play "Kuchh Tum Kaho Kuchh Hum Kahen" written by Ashish Kotwal was staged. It tells the story of Anand and Mansi, who have different outlooks on life. Their poignant banter left the audience emotional.

The Natya Mahotsav concluded on June 23 with the play "Kallu Naai MBBS" written by Moliere. This play is about a barber who is always drunk and beats his wife. His wife devises a plan with the help of servants to teach him a lesson.



In all the plays, actors Sanjay Basliyal, Munmun, P.K. Khayal, Aman Kumar, Shivangi, Raman Kumar, Sudhir Khanna, Naveen, Vishwajeet, and Saumya Yadav gave excellent performances. Backstage management was handled by Sunil Rathore and Naushad,

stage management by Suraj Singh, makeup by Payal and Raj Rani, costumes by Chhobi Saha and Rohit Prasad, and lighting was designed by Shyam Kumar.

The audience greatly appreciated these plays and praised the messages contained within them.

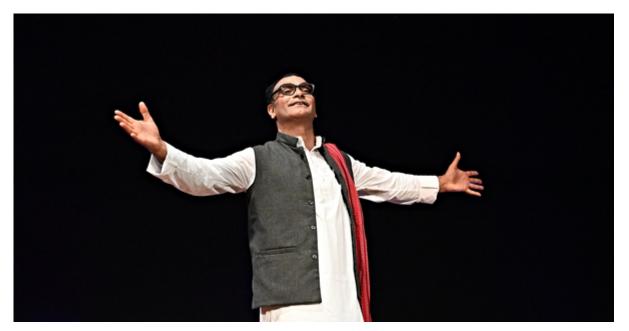
"Sankhaninda: An Innovative Ode to Jyotiprasad Agarwala's Legacy"



Dr Subrat Jyoti Neog's latest play, Sankhaninda (The Chant of Conch), is not just an experimental endeavour interpreting the life and creative genius of Jyotiprasad Agarwala but a profound tribute to a man who was a renowned Assamese polymath — a poet, lyricist, playwright, composer, thinker, prose

writer, music director, producer, and the creator of the first film from North East India. Despite his prolific creative journey, following Mahatma Gandhi's principles, he plunged into the freedom struggle, faced imprisonment, later changed his stance, and joined the revolutionary group 'Mrityu Bahini' (Commando of Death). During the freedom movement days, he penned and composed numerous patriotic songs sung by volunteers, still resonating in the Assamese consciousness. His life and works continue to inspire and connect with us; this play is a testament to that.

Neog's daring approach to Jyotiprasad's philosophy, ambition, aspiration, determination, and ability to inspire others towards the noble cause of independence, as reflected in his writings, is a testament to his creative prowess. The play's slender plot thread involving young artists rehearsing a musical based on Jyotiprasad's works presented unconventionally is a masterstroke. The writerdirector's initial hesitation, fearing the public might not accept his avant-garde approach that defied prevailing norms, adds to the intrigue. Lost in thought, he suddenly envisioned Jyotiprasad appearing before him, engaging in a dialogue and debate. This discourse led them to explore Jyotiprasad's life, and the playwright discovered his life and works' inherent connection and amalgamation. The drama culminated on a positive note, encouraging creative souls.



Dr. Neog had little dramatic material to use for writing the play, except for a few incidents from Jyotiprasad's life. Most of the dialogues reflected Jyotiprasad's thoughts, which Dr. Neog tried to dramatise. The dialogues were mainly taken from Jyotiprasad's writings, allowing the audience to connect with the essence of the legend. He also added that Jyotiprasad wrote the tragic stories of Manbar and Tileshwari, emphasising that the lesser-known Assamese fighters who sacrificed for India's freedom struggle should get proper recognition. These two stories injected a few dramatic moments into the play.

Sangeet Natak Academi awardee Gunakar Dev Goswami directed the play, facing a challenge due to the stage's limited facilities and the content's non-traditional dramatic elements. However, his extensive experience helped overcome the stage-related limitations. Goswami portrayed Jyotiprasad himself and gave a believable performance. As a socio-cultural icon revered in Assamese hearts and minds, describing such a sensitive and respected character demanded great reverence from the actor, a quality Gunakar Dev Goswami demonstrated. Nevertheless, he could have added more vocal variation to his dialogue delivery.



The most creative aspect of the direction was the innovative presentation of Jyotiprasad's songs and poems. Goswami, who also composed the music, preserved the original texts and tunes but creatively utilised the songs to enhance the presentation, adding variety. Such creative endeavours inject vibrancy into tradition and encourage the younger generation to explore our heritage curiously. This innovative writing and presentation approach made the production so successful."

Dramatic Showcase: Masters in Performing Arts (Drama) Present's Two Plays

"Kaalchakra" and "Bank Manager" at Rabindranath Tagore University



A three-day workshop (28 to 30 in 2024) was organized at Rabindranath Tagore University under the Faculty of Sanskrit Prachaya Bhasha Kendra Manviki Udaar Kala Sankay. participants were students of Masters in Performing Arts (Drama). Two plays were prepared by them. "Kaalchakra" written and directed by J.P. Singh and the other play "Bank Manager" written by Anton Chekhov and directed by Shyam Kumar were staged in the Sharada Auditorium of the University on 30 May. The play "Kaalchakra" is based on the legend of Raja Bhoj and Gangu Teli, in which the lead roles were played by J.P. Singh as Raja Bhoj and Tarun Jalota as Gangu Teli. Vaidyanath Sharma as Vaidya and Amatya, Vashishtha Upadhyay played the role of Ang Raj, Jyoti Upadhyay as Chandramukhi, Ashfaq as Musician, Vansh Rathore as Singer, Neeraj played the role of Dwarpal and Lights Designed by Shyam Kumar. The play Kaalchakra was started with a Jarjar Puja as per the rules of Natyashastra. A unique amalgamation of music and acting was seen in the play.

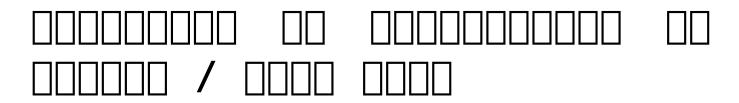


The second story full of humour "Bank Manager" is about a woman who comes to a bank, forces the manager to fulfill her unreasonable demands, the play is full of some humorous exchange of dialogues between the two and ends with the manager literally losing his mind. Nagendra Sharma played the role of the bank manager, the role of the woman was played by Shraboni Saha, Sachin Verma played the role of the assistant manager, music was directed by Vansh Rathore and lighting was designed and directed by Shyam Kumar.

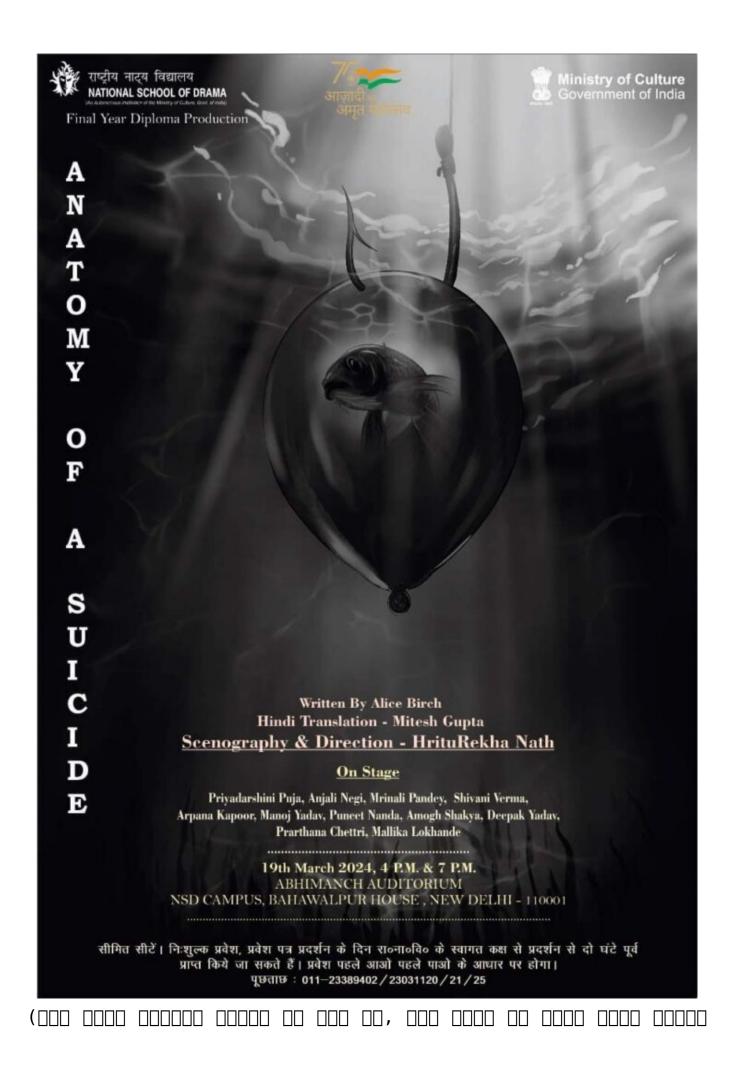


In both the presentations, senior theatre artist and former director of M.P.S.D. Alok Chatterjee and the Vice-Chancellor

of the University Dr. Aditi Chaturvedi Vats and the Vice Chancellor of the University graced their dignified presence as the chief guests. Alok Sir appreciated the play and praised the acting of all the artists. Dr. Aditi Chaturvedi Vats called the students' presentation commendable and called it the heritage of the University. All the students were given certificates after the play. The coordinators of this workshop were Dr. Sanjay Dubey and Dr. Savitri Singh Parihar, cocoordinator Dr. Deepak Tiwari, cooperation from the Faculty of Humanities and Liberal Arts and Mr. Sharad Mishra, Abhishek Deshmane.



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Triumphant Tale of Love and Laughter: 'Mirza Saheb Pyar Ka Dushman Haye! Haye!



What happened when despite all the efforts of Mirza, he could not break the relationship of his daughters Saba and Fiza with their lovers Farhan and Akhtar?

The Comedy Play 'Mirza Saheb Pyar Ka Dushman Haye!Haye!' written and directed by Ashraf Ali was staged in LTG Auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi on 5th May 2024 at 4:30 p.m. The laughter and applause of the audience sitting in the auditorium shows that the audience liked the play very much.

Mirza (Azad Sherawat) who does not want to marry his two

daughters Saba (Noor Chawla) and Fiza (Shilpa Das) to their lover boys which are Farhan (Ankit Sati) and Akhtar (Naresh Kumar). Mirza's wife is Khalida (Shalini Sita) and a hardworking servant is Fakhru (Ritesh). Every scene of the play was very connected due to which the audience remained connected till the end of the play. The audience appreciated the acting of Armaan (Chirag Goyal). The acting of Sharafat Ali (Vishal Shukla) was good. Every character played its role well. Fakhru's character was full of enthusiasm but at some places his behavior towards his master seemed too loud. Many times an issue was being repeated again and again, which could lead to editing. Azad Sherawat's performance in the role of Mirza was guite strong.

According to the play, the background music was selected by the play's writer and director Ashraf Ali. The backstage partners were Shikhar Tiwari, Manik Sharma, Vinay Kumar, Rajan Kumar, Simran and Amar Shah. Noor Islam was in videography. The stage decoration and lighting concept further enhanced the scenes of the play.

"Mirza Saheb Pyar Ka Dushman Haye! Haye!" was a hit with the audience! It's always great to hear about successful theater productions. It seems like the actors really brought their characters to life, and the backstage crew did an excellent job too. The director's choice of background music must have added a lot to the atmosphere of the play. And kudos to the playwright for crafting such an engaging story.

