

Play 'Couples Shuffle' Conveys Message to Audience with Laughter

The husband-wife relationship is considered to be the most sacred in the world. Love and trust bind both, but many times husband and wife quarrel by finding shortcomings in each other and a third takes advantage of it. Something similar was seen in Anuragna Theatre Group's presentation "**Couples Shuffle**", written and directed by Ashraf Ali. The play was performed on December 24 at Black Canvas, L.T.G. Auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi-01.



Sharma ji (Chirag) house where he lives with his wife (Shruti Aastha) Chawla. There is always a tussle between the two over small things. Meanwhile, their neighbor Dubey (Bilal Khan) enters, who tries to take advantage of the conflict between those husband and wife and put a string on Shruti. Meanwhile, Maya (Manisha Sharma) enters. Sharma ji is very impressed by seeing Maya and tries to increase friendship. This dilemma goes on for a long time and finally it is revealed that Dubey and Maya are husband and wife, and they came to Sharma ji's house to investigate them in search of the Best Couple Award

in which both of them failed.

Amidst laughter, this play also gives a message to the audience that 'husband and wife should never leave each other in any situation and should maintain trust in each other'. Chirag played his character well in the role of Sharma, as well as his wife Shruti's character had many shades, which she succeeded in keeping in front of the audience. In the role of Dubey, Bilal Khan kept the entire drama tied with his acting and put many laughs in it, as well as the performance of Manisha Sharma in the role of Maya was also praise worthy.

Behind the stage were Goldie in the music, lighting was done by Manik Sharma, Kamal Negi was in the costumes and Ankit was in the stage material as well as Shamsher Khan and Avinash Tiwari in the set.



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.

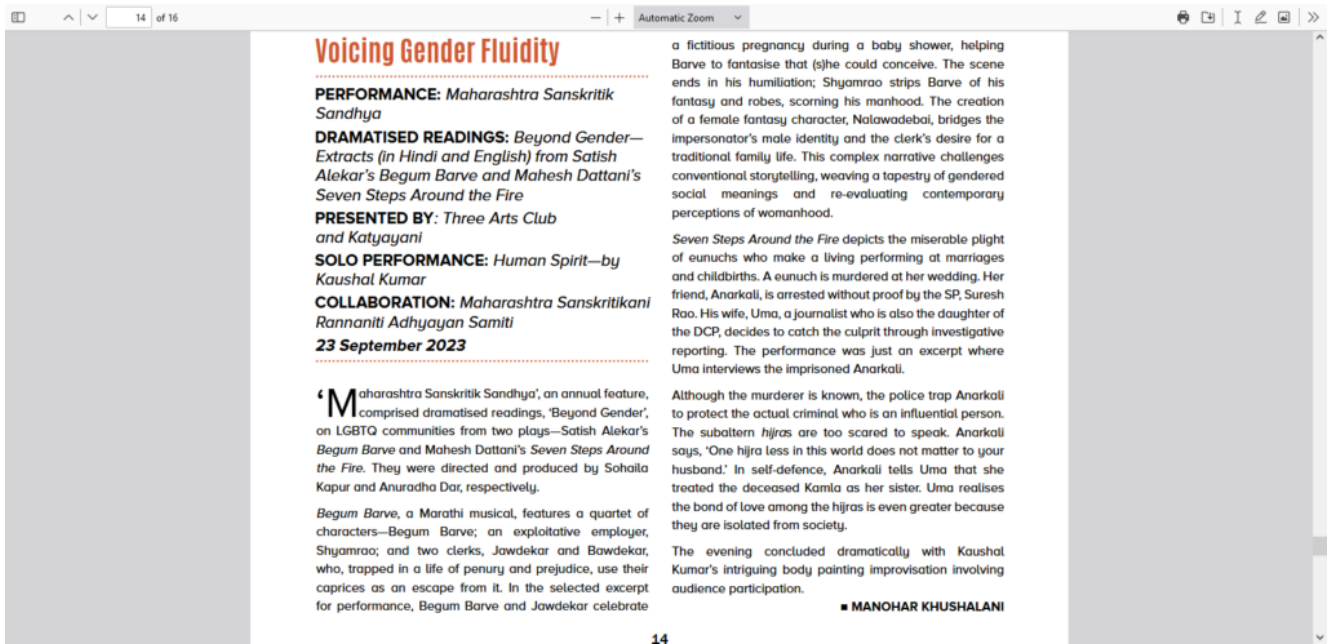
Begum Barve, the Marathi musical, features a quartet of characters: Begum Barve, an exploitative employer, Shyamrao, and two clerks, Jawdekar and Bawdekar, who, trapped in a life of penury and prejudice, use their caprices as an escape from it. In the selected excerpt for performance, Begum Barve and 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.



The 5th Tafarih Festival
Marks the Beginning of a
Unique Journey of Literature
and Art



The unique event of **“Fifth Tafarih”** festival organized by Sili Sales Foundation provides us with a beautiful opportunity to connect with literature, art and cultural literacy. Under this festival, eminent persons from various fields have given us an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion on literary and artistic topics by sharing their experiences and perspectives.

The fifth edition began with the lighting a lamp by Senior Theatre Personalies K.K.Kohli, Diwan Singh Bajeli, Shyam Kumar, Pratap Sharma Somvanshi and Sili Sales Foundation’s director Priyanka Sharma. It began with a discussion on ‘Growing distance between novels and stage’, in which senior theatre persons, journalists, and writers shared their vision. It is a platform where an atmosphere of deep discussion on literary and artistic topics has been created. The guests were Diwan Singh Bajeli, Pratap Sharma Somvanshi, Aditi Maheshwari and Rama Yadav. In the discussion, Rama Yadav said, “Today the novel is getting distant from the stage, for which we have to take important steps. We have to inspire the youth to read books and novels. Maybe this will make today’s youth aware.”



Television actress Reena Agarwal and cinematographer Naresh Sharma shared their views on the impact and challenges of social media. The stage was moderated by Priyanka Sharma, Director, Silly Sales Foundation. Natsamrat director Shyam Kumar and senior theatre personality Himanshu B Joshi also shared their experiences.



The play "Stree Subodhini" brought the festival to life in an entertaining and cultural form. The solo presentation 'Stree Subodhini' written by Mannu Bhandari and was directed by late Tripurari Sharma. Munmun Singh was the winner of sangeet natak akademi award captivated the hearts of all the audience with his acting.



The last highlight of the first day of the festival was 'Mehfile Sukhand', which tied a different parallel and was directed by Shamir Khan. The fifth Tafarih Festival is being held from 2:00 pm to 9:30 pm on November 18th at 29/1 Civil Lines, Delhi, where there will be a confluence of art and culture.

In the same way, an atmosphere of partnership has been created in the world of experience, art, and literature associated with various aspects of the festival. This is a time when together we can fill our cultural heritage with richness by connecting with literature and art.



Celebrating Art and Culture: The Vibrant Tapestry of 5th 'Tafreeh' Festival in Delhi



“Tafreeh” is a unique celebration of the world of art and theater in Delhi organized by Silly Souls Foundation. It is the first garden arts festival known for plays, readings, mushairas, interviews, and musical performances. Its fifth edition is taking place from 16th November to 18th November at Silly Souls Studio, 29/1 Civil Lines, Delhi.

This year’s event is dedicated to the memory of Tripurari Sharma and will run from 2 pm to 9:30 pm every day. The main attraction this time is the plays performed every evening,

including the comedy play “Stree Subodhini” on the first evening. Apart from this, this time “Mushaira” is also going to be held for the first time in “Tafreeh”.

The festival will have daily conversations with renowned personalities from the field of theater and art, including Silly Souls directors Priyanka Sharma and Naveen Choudhary. The first day’s discussion is “The Growing Distance between Novel and Stage”, which will feature Devendra Raj Ankur, Diwan Singh Bajeli, Pratap Sharma Somvanshi, Aditi Maheshwari and Rama Yadav. The guests on the first day of Pratyaksha will be Reena Aggarwal and Naresh Sharma.



The Mushaira to be held on the second day will include Farhat Ehsaas, Tarkash Pradeep, Vikas Sharma Raaz, Irshad Khan Sikandar and Pallav Mishra. Professor and motivational speaker Vijendra Tafrih will be the guest of Pratyaksha. On the second

day of the festival, you will experience a special and unique musical performance in the form of "Wife's Letter". After the open mic on the last day, our direct guests will be Hema Singh and Kushal Dubey.

The evenings of 'Tafreeh' are famous for their musical performances. Presentation by Subhradeep Sahu and musical rendition of poetry by Sahir Ludhianvi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Kaifi Azmi by Raabta Group are the attractions of this time. Watching the "Tafreeh" festival will be a unique and enjoyable experience. At Tafreeh Utsav, you will not only immerse yourself in the roots of theater but also enjoy sharing the wonderful art and literature of Delhi.



Director Priyanka Sharma

Silly Souls Foundation



SILLY SOULS FOUNDATION PRESENTS



Dedicated To:



Tripurari Sharma

16 Nov



STREE SUBODHINI

Dir: Tripurari Sharma

Writer : Mannu Bhandari

6:30 PM

MEHFIL -E- SUKHAN

Dir: Shamir Khan

Musical Shayri

8:30 PM



DAASTAAN -E- GURU NANAK

Dir: Kuljeet Singh

Writer : Kuljeet Singh

6:30 PM

PATNI KA PATRA

Dir: Priyanka Sharma

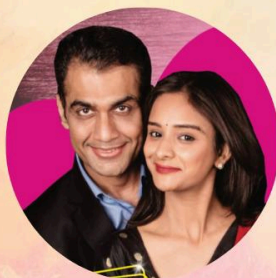
Writer: Rabindranath Tagore

8:30 PM



17 Nov

18 Nov



JAB WE SEPARATED

Dir: Rakesh Bedi

Writer: Rakesh Bedi

6:30 PM

GHAZAL

Vocalist : Subhradeep Sahoo

8:30 PM



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**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

Seasoned with Humour

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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■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

2

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

Natsamrat's plays Captivated the Audience



It would not be wrong to say that the audience always waits for Natsamrat's plays. Something similar was seen at Black Canvas (LTG Auditorium) where two different plays by Natsamrat were staged on 30th September and 1st October at 3:30 pm.



The play **Doosra Aadmi Doosra Aurat** written by Vibha Rani was staged on 30 September at 3:30 pm and directed by Rajesh Bakshi. The acting talent of two actors, Munmun and Rajesh Bakshi, was commendable on the stage. The play depicts the problems arising from the disintegration of personal relationships due to modern materialistic lifestyle. In the drama, Shoma Das comes to Mumbai for a job and is attracted to her office colleague Sambhav Singh. Both of them try to move forward by taking support from each other in the difficult web of life. This two-character play based on the psychology of men and women was presented by Natsamrat.



The play **ChandraLok.Com** was staged on 1 October before a houseful audience. Two different stories were staged in this play. The first story was on earth and the second story was on Chandralok. The first story was based on “Bank Manager” written by Anton Chekhov and the second story was based on Harishankar Parsai’s famous story Inspector Matadin Chand. The director of this play is Rakesh Kodinya and the creative director is Shyam Kumar.

All the artists on stage made the audience laugh a lot with their acting and also gave a message through the elephant. The actors were Munmun, cipf-es.org Vishwajeet, Arun Prakash, Sudhir Khanna, Mohd. Zaheed, Abhishek, Himanshu, Aman. Music was conducted by Shivangi and lighting was conceived by Vikrant Sharma. Stage props were by Rohit Prasad, set props were by Suraj Singh and Lokesh, makeup by Payal Rani and costumes by Rekha Joshi and Chhobi Saha and stage assistants were Vansh Rathore.

பெரியார் நினைவு நிகழ்ச்சி

நாளை: பெரியார் நினைவு நிகழ்ச்சி



பெரியார் நினைவு நிகழ்ச்சி என்பது பெரியார் அவர்களின் பங்களிப்பை நினைவுகூர்ப்பதற்காக நடைபெறும் ஒரு நிகழ்ச்சி. பெரியார் அவர்கள் இந்தியாவின் மிகப்பெரிய சமூக சீர்திருத்த இயக்கங்களில் ஒருவராக இருந்தார். அவர் மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர் மற்றும் ஒரு மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர். பெரியார் அவர்கள் இந்தியாவின் மிகப்பெரிய சமூக சீர்திருத்த இயக்கங்களில் ஒருவராக இருந்தார். அவர் மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர் மற்றும் ஒரு மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர். பெரியார் அவர்கள் இந்தியாவின் மிகப்பெரிய சமூக சீர்திருத்த இயக்கங்களில் ஒருவராக இருந்தார். அவர் மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர் மற்றும் ஒரு மிகவும் திறமையான ஒரு தலைவர்.



Bhopal – The students from different states of the country, who worked day and night in the nine-day drama workshop (2nd to 9th September), made the presentation of the drama “**Dootvakyam**” written by Mahakavi Bhas unforgettable with their lively acting.

By **Rabindranath Tagore University’s** Sanskrit, Prachya Bhasha Shikshan Evam Bhartiya Gyan Parampara Kendra’s PG Diploma in Natyashastra Evam Vishwarangmanch and Master in Performing Arts students enthralled the audience with their wonderful presentation of “Dootvakyam” under the direction of Shri Manoj Nair (Director of Tagore National School of Drama).

It is noteworthy that in ‘Dootvakyam’ the character of Lord Shri Krishna was played by three actors and the characters of Duryodhana and Sudarshan Chakra were played by four actors each. Everyone, with their acting, brought life to the characters on stage and kept the audience engaged till the end.

On this occasion, Senior Poet-Storyteller, Director Vishwa Rang and Chancellor of Rabindranath Tagore University, Shri Santosh Choubey said that ‘Dootvakyam’ is a difficult play. Its presentation is a very challenging task in itself. It is a very happy occasion that the students of Natyashastra accepted this challenge and gave this unique presentation.

Dr. Radhavallabh Tripathi, a well-known litterateur and advisor to the Center of Sanskrit, Prachya Bhasha Shikshan Evam Bhartiya Gyan Parampara Kendra, said that I have seen the presentations of many Sanskrit plays, but I had never imagined such a presentation of 'Dootvakyam'. It was truly an unforgettable performance. This experiment of playing one character by four actors at the same time is a welcome innovative initiative in the direction of theatrical productions.

At the beginning of the drama presentation, the subject of 'Dootvakyam' was highlighted by Sh. Vinay Upadhyay, Director of Tagore Vishwa Kala Evam Sanskriti Kendra. Professor Sangeeta Johri, Dr. Ruchi Mishra Tiwari was also on the stage.

It is noteworthy that the successful coordination of the seven-day drama workshop and the unforgettable event of priesthood ritual workshop and drama presentation were done by Dr. Sanjay Dubey, Co-ordinator, Sanskrit, Prachya Bhasha Shikshan Evam Bhartiya Gyan Parampara Kendra. Great support by Deepak Tiwari, Savitri Singh Parihar, Sanjay Singh Rathore, Abhishek, Sharad Mishra etc.

On this occasion, all the artists and students of priesthood rituals were honored by presenting them certificates and insignia. Tagore National School of Drama had special support in this.

On stage in the play Dootvakyam – J.P. Singh, Nagendra Kumar Sharma, Uma Shankar, Vaidyanath Sharma, Mandeep Kumar Nemewal, Vashishtha Upadhyay, Shraboni Saha, Surendra Kumar Pandey, Tarun Jalota, Sachin Verma, Sanjeev Sharma, Ansh Rathore, Namrata Mali, Vansh Rathore, Neha Rani, Jyoti Upadhyay, Ganesh Madulkar, Ashfaq Noor Khan Pathan lent their talent.

Dr. Sanjay Kumar Dubey and Vikrant Bhatt were the stage

managers, Abhishek Deshman was the assistant stage manager, Dr. Anand Kumar Pandey did the stage decoration, Sharad Mishra was in the stage props, Smita Nair and Rashmi Acharya were in costumes, Tagore National School of Drama student's did the stage decoration. Flute player Nitesh Mangrole, Harmonium player Aagya Dubey, Rhythm and musical support were given by Abhi Srivastava and Jai Ravare, Light Design & Co-Director were Shyam Kumar and the Director of this play is Manoj Nair.



**RAMAYANA: FRACTURED, FIXED
AND FORETOLD Oglam**

Presentation- Janardan Ghosh's Narration.

The Concept:

Ramayana has been told and retold over centuries but the difference lies in the way it is reiterated. Not with the perception of recounting a tale but with an intent to reinvent it to unleash the hidden secrets of this unbound narrative we attempt to retell again and again taking the artistic liberty that it affords timelessly to revisit it with an innovative perspective. The project is an enterprise to endorse the epic as a narrative that is much ahead of its times in its intrinsic potential to dislodge our linear interpretations of this colossal tale as a religious account of Hinduism. The endeavour is to re-evaluate the learn by rote method through which we have perpetually studied this epic; any change in the script is a larger than life or a utopian idea. In a country like India where the myth goes beyond the circumference of the story and becomes a 'sacred tale,' to conceive certain alterations in the script is a indeed a formidable venture. Yet, this redoubtable interpretation on our part has been an outcome of our humble initiative of making the narrative appear different and hence more thought- provoking as it raises questions on the fundamental aspects of human existence without tampering with the organic theme in a unique way. The Ramayana is fractured, fixed and foretold for an audience of today that's intelligent enough to accept variations in established Literature if it offers food for thought. This differently abled understanding of the epic cognitively sheds light on the of presence of the elements that demystifies the glory of this mythological narrative making it a poignant tale of a King's sacrifice, struggle and his confrontation with the ultimate evil that is insurmountably challenging. Accompanying him is the divine feminine- the motherly prakriti, his consort

whose worthiness being questioned every moment despite her inevitability in life is a tragic disclosure. When Nature is so serene and comforting, why do we exploit her? Is the question that resounds in every chant of the story teller who happens to have taken the onus of narrating the epic his own way without letting the cliché notions of propriety affect him. It is the kathavachna tradition that comes to the fore in the process wherein the kathavachak tries his level best to arrest the attention of the spectators who have gathered around him to witness his ability of telling a tale fascinatingly.

The alterations made in the tale are the result of an adaptation of the epic on which it is based. Nonetheless, the fact remains that these changes are made to inspire a generation of listeners to re-read the epic with an open mind without being influenced by the halo of divinity that revolves around it. This performance is towards giving Ramayana a form and shape that traverses the boundaries of conventions, religions and even Nations becomes a tale of global reality that surrounds human existence today. Our utilitarian approach towards nature, her exploitation under the garb of progress and development are universally undeniable truths that prevail in this tale of a magnanimous King who readily sacrificed everything in his life. His tales of heroism that prevail in our memory must not be confined to the deeds of valour but beneath there lies a purpose – to make the realization that the victory of good over evil comes with a price to pay. Divine Prakriti is insulted, hurt when the divine masculine shows his worthiness ascertains his valour and she ultimately chooses a silent retreat into the oblivion. Ramayana is indeed fractured at this juncture but the fact remains that it has to be fixed and again told for the generations to come and the Kathakar takes up this responsibility. Everything we see is an illusion, it is just a dramatization of a popular tale but it aims at restructuring and reframing our often erroneous understanding of the tale as synonym of dictation of certain

principles. It is therefore that often every time the tale adopts a new form and incidents do not coincide with the actual epic. Shoorpanakha becomes Mareecha and Sita Swayamvar takes place after the exile of Rama and Laxmana in the forest; only to make us comprehend that the kathakaar's choice to tell a tale remains uninterfered which opens up newer possibilities of engendering a CREATIVE PIECE- retold with a purpose: to enlighten. This is Ramayana – Fractured, fixed and foretold.

The Performative aspect:

The finer aspects of the kathakar's(Janardan Ghosh's) stage presence are intrinsically interwoven in the tale so inseparably that his gait, the gestures, the postures the expressions all depict a conceptual assertion of the Ramayana. The fluidity of the narration is indelible and the intonation is deliberately controlled to suit the parameters of excellent dialogue delivery which ought to have a thunderous proclamation of the epic coupled with a subtle yet effective volume that's verbose and yet aptly restrained. There is a performative glory inseparably blended with the musical beats of a folk rendition that invites the onlookers to participate in the performance. The Kathakar's splendid stage presence with his enormous voice modulations make the characters live in stage; needless to say- male or female. There's a quaint androgyny that Janardan Ghosh establishes on stage with his one man army – himself who appears as a reservoir of actors essaying different roles evocative of the Bahurupi artists that are used to playing diverse roles and yet one at a time. Slow and steady wins the race is the strategem that the Kathakaar deliberately adopts when he narrates simultaneously playing varied roles- Rama, Sita, Shurpanakha and above all the colossal Ravana. The entry of Ghosh defines folk narration that's charming endearing and at the same time prudent in its discretion of becoming stern when the narration becomes the somber from the recreational. It is a folk teller whose telling of the tale exploiting all the assets of performative

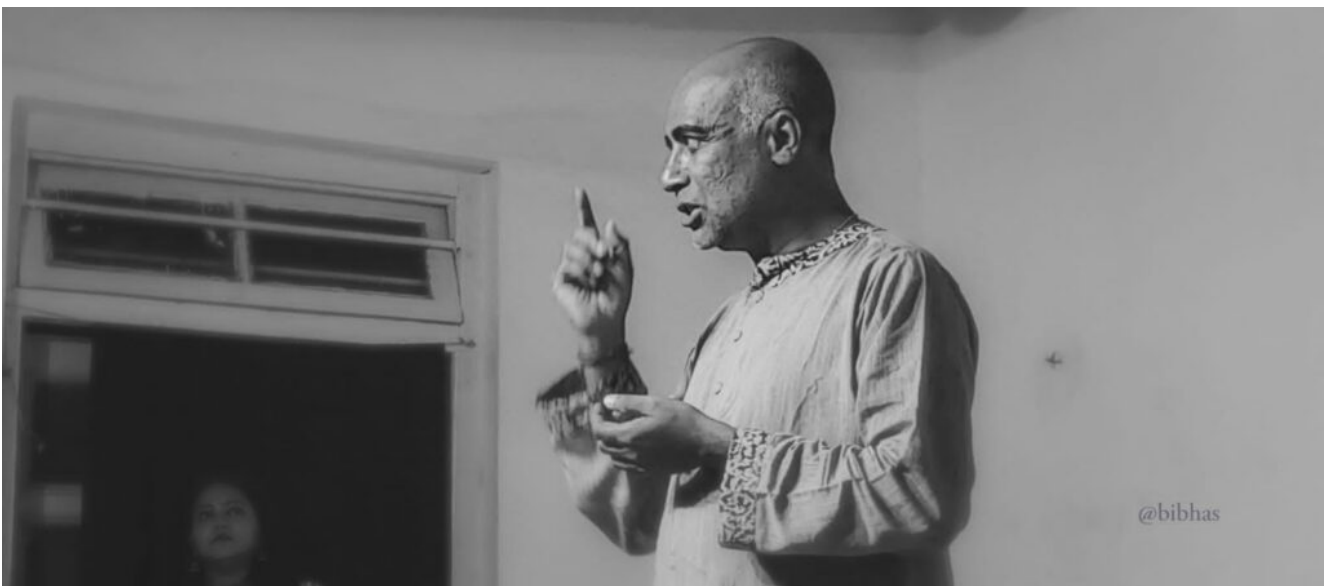
aspect become more than conspicuous. He cries and groans and shouts and screams and laughs and proclaims and sits and stands and jumps and circumambulates the stage as if capturing it from all its directions. Yet he releases the stage equally well and comes back to himself as he knows the tale will speak for itself. The brilliance of a learned actor becomes visible in Ghosh's choice to be Indian in his compassionate and anxious mannerisms of flourishing a folk tale of his nation and yet intelligently global in his approach towards narrating it objectively putting up a universal concern: Eco feminism. A subject matter of relevance for all across ages, Sita... a woman of education he so confidently he says and ends it so poignantly saying and in the end she immersed herself in the earth. And we automatically question " Why? Why do we hurt her – the one who nurtures us so fondly? The divine feminine. Ghosh brings the ties together: Of Sita's separation from Rana and of her being deserted in the end: Both are aligned. Whether she got accidentally separated from him when Ravana abducted her or when he sent her away, in both cases, she is the sufferer. The performative narration impresses upon re-reading the epic independent of the notions of divinity attached to it.

Dr. Payal Trivedi

For comments(if any) please use the comment box given below.









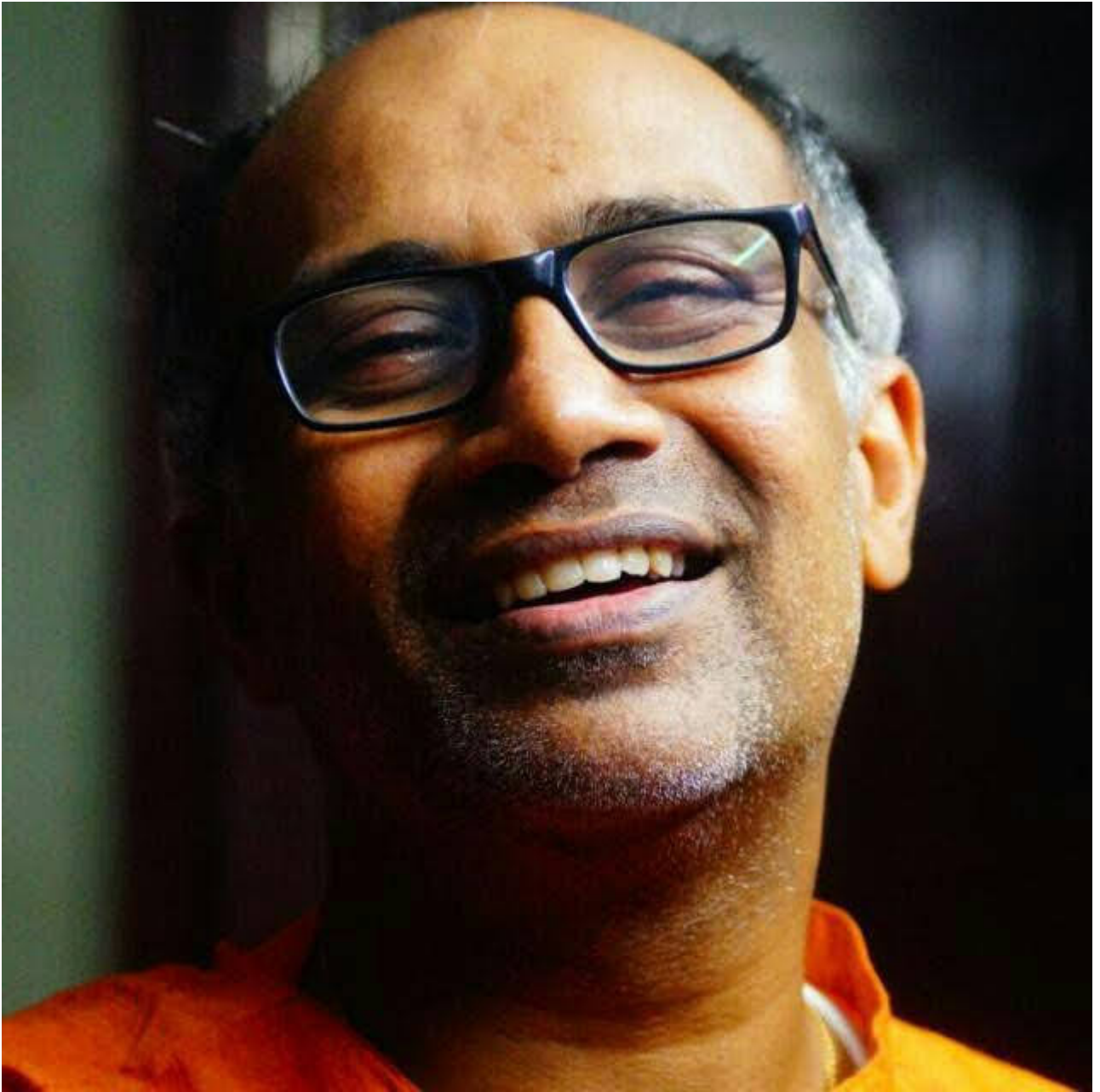
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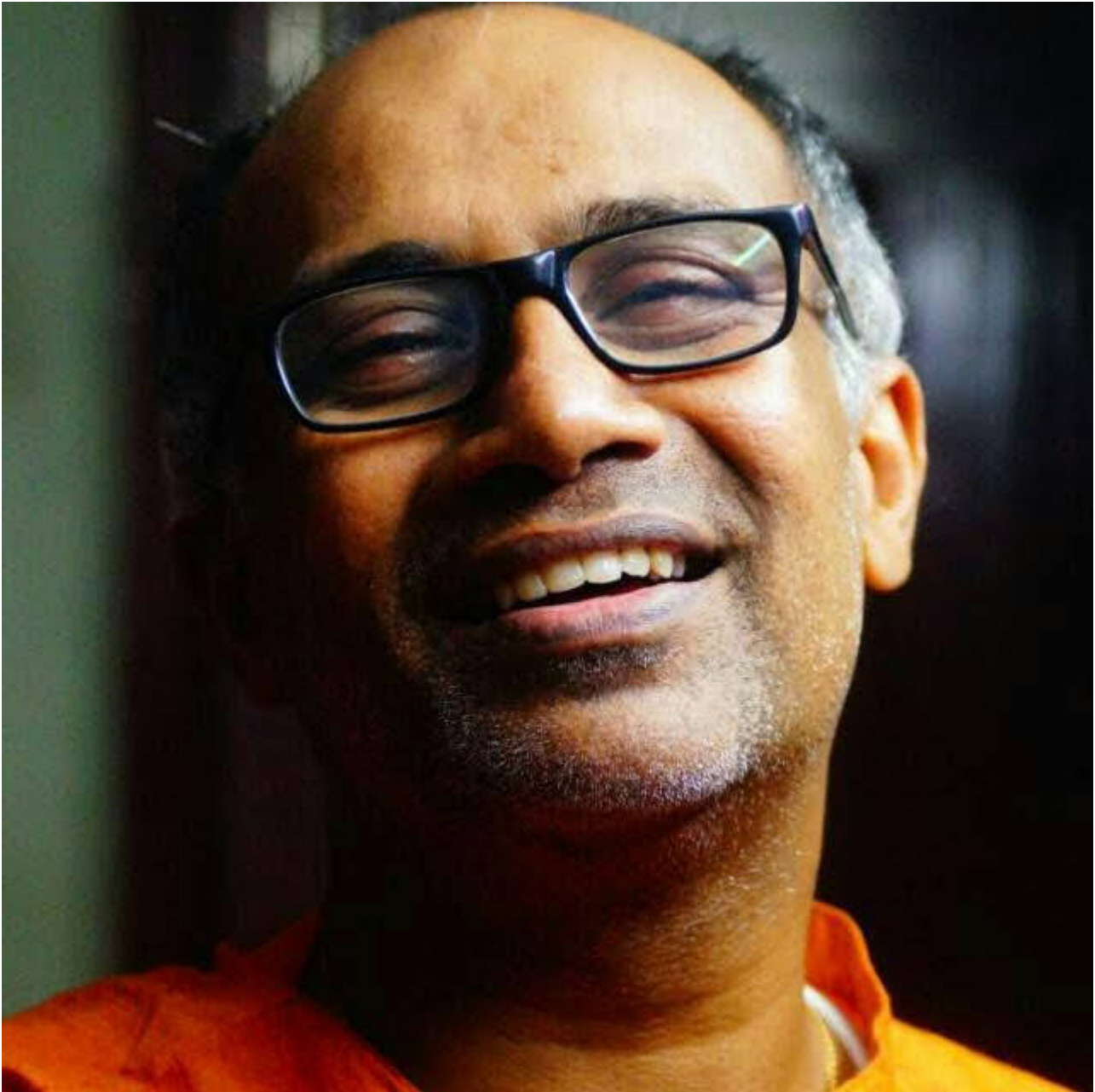


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Janardan Ghosh's Kayantar – Towards the need for Transformation



KAYANTAR- A film co-directed by Rajdeep Paul & Sarmistha Maity

The lead actor in the film, Dr Janardan Ghosh, is really versatile and multi talented. He is a performing artist, academic, theatre director, film actor, playwright, performance coach and storyteller (Katha 'Koli, a new art of storytelling) whose practice includes the use of traditional theories, contemporary performance vocabulary, and interactive media. His research-based work engages the indigenous practice methods in urban spaces exploring the perspectives of historicity, spiritual consciousness, intertextual dialogue, and body-space dynamics of myths, tales and gossips.

Kayantar- is a poignant tale of religious discrimination that leads to repenting circumstances for those that are forced to quietly endure and hence implicitly exploited to endorse conformity to the extent of losing their identities and eventually their lives. Moreover, it is a tale that has a subplot dealing with the pathos of the Bahurupi artists who beg in front of the people for their survival; their art not being recognized as a respectable profession but being condemned as a demeaning activity, pursued by those that are financially underprivileged and become nomadic thus imploring in front of the people for alms in order to make both ends meet.

The film is heart-wrenching as we see how the Bahurupi Muslim artist (played by Dr. Janardan Ghosh) dressed as the Hindu Goddess Kali appears in front of his two children; only to consecutively become crippled and hence forcefully passing on his legacy to his son who dislikes pursuing his father's profession. The son has a point. He being a Muslim roaming around in the apparel of a Hindu Goddess is disparaged by the religious stalwarts of his community, is mocked at by the children of the village and is boycotted by many conservatives as 'Bhikhari' – a pauper. These facts reiterated in an overtly painful and innately stark undertone are enough evidences to make the pangs of the young man believable and evocative of the viewers' empathy for him.

That the innocent youth who has not acquired this profession by his own choice and it has been rather forced on him comes as a harsh and undeniable truth that grills our thinking capacities to the extent of questioning all our modern theories of global indivisibilities of culture and religion. When the young lad takes an anomalous decision to choose a girl of the rival community and loses his life because of being engulfed in the holocaust of communal riots that take place in his village, our conscience gets stirred and we as viewers of the film are compelled to revise our notions of living in an industrialized, progressive world. We are made to

rethink whether the circumferences of culture, creed, race and religion only exist on national borders or are they still prevalent somewhere within our psyches and we are only ignoring these under the pretext of being the civilized community.

Within the framework of a story that so effectively becomes pertinent with the theme of universal relevance as we still find the world divided into castes and communities and people identifying themselves through their religions, there is a very intriguing story of Asia, the young girl who wishes to adorn herself as Kali and pursue her Bahurupi father's profession with confidence and dignity. The tale comes as an pleasant surprise when Asia is founded engaging herself in painting her body coal black and rejoicing to see herself in the gruesome look. It seems a woman's reclusive identification of the other dimension of the divine feminine that exists within her apparent demure image of a meek girl.

That Kali chooses Asia's body to be her abode is also a fact that demands our prudent understanding of the fact that religious differences prevail only on the superficial level as the Bahurupi keeps singing "Apanar Apni fana hole shei bhed jana jai"- Means that realization comes only when the distinction between mine and yours gets erased. Such an indubitable truth of the oneness of divinity is fondly repeated as a backdrop of the entire film makes the theme of the movie apparent- It is not by dividing but it is by uniting that humanity can realize in the oneness of this universe wherein every entity is the fragment of that supreme energy that we call God. The philosophical context in the film does not let the film lose its ties with an integral theme of gender discrimination.

Asia takes the permission of her father to dress up as Kali and pursue her profession as a Bahurupi. Nonetheless, the Bahurupi, her father, gets annoyed with her and says that he cannot allow his daughter to wander on the roads as a

prostitute. Why the man who has earned a living with the same profession disallows his daughter to follow his footsteps? The film gives us a jolt when we hear these words of the Bahurupi. If it were such a demeaning profession, why on earth did he adopt it? Was he also forced by his family to adopt it and with great reluctance he went on from door to door dressed up as Kali and asked for money from the people? The film does not answer these questions but raising these queries in our minds the film acts as a thunderbolt when we see a Muslim girl adopting her father's profession ultimately when her brother dies in the communal riots and she has to earn a living for her home ultimately as her father is crippled and is unable to do anything to make a living. Though she finally opts to become Kali, the intimidating figure of the bloodthirsty goddess who is so venomous becomes the most pensive image of pathos; she has to become Kali only to support her family and this time her father is helpless and cannot stop her even if he wants to. She walks on the railway track fearlessly continuing her journey on the route that has her brother's remnants that remind us of the gruesome ending that the young boy faced due to his unfortunate choice.

Diluting the conformist image of Kali as a fearsome goddess, Kayantar presents another facet of hers as a sad feminine figure who wanders helplessly for recognition. When she walks on the road men do not fear her ghastly appearance. They in fact dare to tease her which undermines her ferocity only to expose the truth that a woman's frightening exterior cannot dismantle the atrocities meted out to her in a man's world. She may be regarded as an epitome of Kali and the goddess may have chosen her to manifest her form but the fact remains that she is an ordinary woman confined within domestic sphere that does not allow her to operate according to her will and discretion. Her life is what a man wants it to be. She may dress up as Kali but she will never be regarded equal to the formidable goddess of the temples and the cemeteries. She will remain as an ordinary woman. When the Bahurupi tries to

disclose the truth in front of her thus refusing her to wander on the roads as Kali, it is this harsh reality that he tries to explain to her which remains unadulterated truth pertinent to all times.

That a woman is exploited under the pretext of granting her equal rights and overt sexual violence and tacit manipulation are indeed a part of this so called man's world even today are not hidden realities but are undeniable truths. Kayantar shows that if Kali wanders as an ordinary powerless woman Asia, she will be shamed. The film aptly demystifies the wrathful image of Kali and extracts the ordinary femininity in her that seeks recognition till date.

When the goddess Kali accidentally stepped on Kala- Lord Shiva as per the mythical account, she was unhappy and wailed for the fact that she had made a grave mistake of putting her feet on her husband's chest; a sinful conduct for a woman as per the conventional theories of Hinduism. It is not Kali's pathos that is underpinned in the temples when we worship her as the mother goddess. It is her ire that is being continually recognized and the red tongue that lolled accidentally out of her mouth due to her unconscious act of putting her feet on Shiva's chest is ironically regarded as a mark of her fearful image. Kayantar shows the other aspect of this horrific Kali and that is – Kali as the one that resides in the domicile of an artist who earns his morsel of food by emoting her from door to door. When the Kayantar takes place and the Bahurupi allows her to possess him, the possession is just on the level of the exterior. There is no internal possession because the artist cannot afford it. He is supposed to be submissive and not exert his redoubtable image in front of others. He is a beggar.

The film talks about the pathos of the village artists that pursue their profession only as a means of earning the basic necessities in life. With the advent of complex technologies in the realm of entertainment, these artists are deprived of

their due recognition. Kayantar – the transformation is of the body and not the soul but this is what the film seems to have intended. The ardour of transforming one's soul is explained through the restraint that the Bahurupi imposes on himself and his son who both dress up as Kali only because they have to earn money to win their bread and butter. There is no philosophical enlightenment in the process of transforming themselves. It stays at the superficial level even after the Bahurupi keeps singing the song 'Apnar Apni fana hole shei bhed jana jai- which talks about the need to escalate beyond the boundaries of time and space to realize divinity.

The song remains merely a song and the spiritual message ingrained in it is only a matter of speculation. In the end, the Muslim girl Asia adopting Kali's image does undermine religious discrimination but it does not become prominent because; the extremely painful state of a girl who takes up a vocation on account of a drastic change that occurs in her life of losing her own brother is a telling tale that completely dilutes the fury in the image she adopts and brings out the agony of an ordinary woman incarcerated in the prison of conformity that she is unable to challenge or disown.

All in all, Kayantar is a film that stimulates us to understand religion beyond the confines of the right and the wrong and urges us to revise our cliché associations of Gods and Goddesses as intimidating figures of the temples who possess their disciples that invoke them in the temple rituals. It certainly is an eye-opener to the fact that the transformation of our soul is needed but is often occluded by our senses governed by selfish motives that thwart the spiritual awakening which engenders the realization of truth.

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