

# Stake holders in Artistic Practices: An Economic Model

When we hear the word stake holders, it reminds us of a company, with a marketing head looking into profits for the company. Do we see a theatre company to be functional as a profit making company, most unfortunately no! In India, with a strong tradition of socialism and the IPTA and the ideas of being the catalyst for change and activism we often fail to see a theatre company to have an economic model behind it. With increasing globalisation and now India adapting itself into a more and more global economy, theatre should also not fail to look at the most important aspect of being an economically strong and viable model. This hence will create more and more stake holders in artistic practices.

In India, the practices are dependent highly on grant giving bodies and neglect to get into even selling tickets for their shows. The management practices are highly lacking and often times publicity is given the last minute emphasis and impetus. Often one sees that it is the management students, despite their little formal training students doing a much better job at marketing and public relations. What we really lack today is an equally strong focus on theatre management. Theatre in India should go much beyond waiting for the god in form to a government grant to arrive or to wait for a private benefactor to knock the doorsteps of the company.

The stake holders of a theatre company is thus not the role of only the producer and the director but the entire team. Unless and until the theatre company does not make profits it will impossible to give any monetary remuneration to the

actors. The actors hence will be forced to look for work beyond theatre and get more and more into films ( if lucky) or be forced to act in sometimes absurd television serials in which they might go largely unnoticed.

We lack a strong focus and determination to get beyond the mechanics of staging a play and not looking at marketing in specific and general terms. This input will also be able to not keep a record of all the old audiences but also create new ones and go to places that were unexplored before. Theatre management will also make sure that designing of the publicity, posters, brochures and handouts are created in most effective manner. One can perhaps see the role of the theatre manager as the most important person as he is the chief operative officer of the theatre company. His role is that of an COO like any other important company. Its time now to hence consider this role as a pivotal one and make sure that each theatre company has the focus and determination to start raking profits. The time is now to act!

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## **Significance of Props - Gouri Nilakantan**



aural appeal. It can satisfy us by graceful or spectacular senses presented on the stage, can gratify our ear or heart. This is efficient only through props that makes the experience of the audience go beyond his reality.

Andrew Sofer, in his book, "The Stage life of Props" says that, "the object must be seen as having a sign." The stage props hence has a strong presence, sometimes as strong as the actor themselves. As Felix Bossonnet sees the props they are much more than the physical presence they hold. Props have to be read between the complex relationship between the actor the text and the audience. It provides a complete whole experience of transmission of the audience into the world of the "play or krida". As Sofer sees the distinctions between the props and the characters should become more and more blurred, it should be amalgamated as one whole. The responsibility of this hence is not just within the text but by the directors as well as the actors.

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## **Abhimanyu: The Legend of a Tragic War Hero / Manohar Khushalani**



Abhimanyu, is perhaps a unique character in Mahabharata whose death brings you inspiration. Pandit Radheshyam Katahvachak's ***Veer Abhimanyu***, a play engulfed in deceit, treachery, misuse of power, and politics Directed by **Hema Singh** with **NSD's** second year students had all the elements of a professional show, despite the fact that Hema intended it to be a teaching production. Interesting thing was that for a martial play the female students were playing the roles of male soldiers. At no point did one feel that the roles should have been played by males. The performance of female actors was as aggressive and bold as was required. **Guru Salam Biswajit Singh's** Martial art training was so thorough that girls could match up to boys in the fight scenes. Also, there was rich use of elements such as dance, songs, Martial arts like *Kallari* and use of percussion and wind instruments (like nagara and dhol) to indicate the war hysteria. As the director explained, the main objective was to teach Parsi style theatre, therefore it was imperative to expose the students to all elements of it, including the melodramatic speech patterns which are so much a part of this theatre. The real challenge was to to work in this style which has a concept of dramatic action and is different from contemporary theatre. The couplets and lyrical dialogues written in typical Parsi style required an understanding of rhyme, pitches, *natgiri*, gestures, postures, language and

poetry. The source of Hema's inspiration was **B.M. Shah**, who made her realise that the Farsi theatre is an unusual blend of classical Sanskrit theatre, folk theater and Victorian theatre. She has gone on to become a foremost proponent of this form of theatre.

The production, thus, tried to create a bridge between contemporary realistic theatre and the traditional Parsi Theatre, reinterpreting it in such a way that audience could relate to it as a modern production.



*Farsi* as Parsi theatre is also called, had a great historical relevance because of its contribution to the freedom struggle. The playwrights created feelings of patriotism, love, renunciation, and kindness in public by writing double meaning dialogues which only the natives understood. It raised voice against imperial rule. At that time, many Indian mythical, historical, courageous characters that fought against injustice, were featured in Parsi theatre so that self-respect and fearlessness increases in public. 'Veer Abhimauyu' is one such epic character, whom the playwright, **Pandit Radheshyam**, brought to life. Legend has it that Abhimanyu was the re-

incarnation of a son of the Moon-God- Chandra. When Chandra was asked to let his son incarnate himself on earth, he made a pact that his son will only remain on earth for 16 years, as he could not bear to be separated from him any longer than that. Abhimanyu was the most loved of all sons of the Pandavas, so much so that Draupadi was said to love him more than her own sons. Draupadi once said that if the Pandavas are not willing to wage war, then her sons led by Abhimanyu will attack and get justice for her and avenge her humiliation. Abhimanyu was trained in all types of warfare by Lord Krishna and Balrama themselves, and later by Pradyumna (Sri Krishna's son). Abhimanyu learnt the art of breaking into the Chakravyuha when he was in Subhadra's womb. It was then Arjuna was narrating the art of breaking into Chakravyuha to Subhadra. But he did not know how to destroy the formation once he was inside, as Subhadra fell asleep while listening to the story and (Abhimanyu in her womb) could learn only half of the technique. This is the reason why he was only able to enter and break but not come out of the Chakravyuha

That was the tragedy of Abhimanyu. The matchless youth who won immortality by his shining heroism in the great Mahabharata war. Pitted, against the mightiest of the mighty in the enemies' ranks, this warrior, barely sixteen, became the sheet-anchor of the Pandavas. The veterans ranged against him had to overcome him only by unfair means.

The production was ably supported by a competent team of theatre professionals. Souti Chakraborty's lighting highlighted the dramatic elements with a blend of light and shadow intermixed with mood lighting. Somesh PBs training of the martial Art of **Kalaripayattu** and **Kajal Ghosh's** Co-Music Design deserve mention. In the design department Kriti V. Sharma's costumes Vishala Mahale's set gave value to the production. Kudos also to Hema's blocking of the play which

created the illusion of a giant battle field. It was indeed a memorable and meaningful evening laced with spirited performances of all the actors.

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## **What is “folk” after all? – Gouri Nilakantan**

“Folk”, the ordinary, the mundane, the one without any purpose, that’s the first thing that comes to ones mind when we think of the word. Is that true, can we negate the voice of the common man, the arts belonging to the masses as just meaningless, not to be cared for? The recognition for folk arts, theatre, music, oral ballads, tales, stories now is a recognized study on its own. It is being now seen as strong discipline to be studied and understood. To categorize and delineate any dramatic performance as being folk, traditional or modern would be simply dispensing them off that can endanger our readings and interpretations for it. Our tradition has to be also be seen in through the eyes of the masses, the simple potter, the folk stories and the music of our villages, or cooking recipes and our theatrical shows all need to be studied in much more depth. While talking about theatre, all dramatic performances display set codes and conventions such as costumes, makeup, text, and use of diction prose or poetry and evolved choreography, movement or premeditated action. It can be said as one having a “traditional process” as pointed out Brynjulf Alver.

By definition it is the process of tradition which creates, alters and renews, chooses and works in new topics in an

endless chain, by the interaction between the individual bearer and the community. (Alver, 47)

Folk drama is said to often belong to the common and non-literate people. It is time to go beyond the 'folk' or the common and rethink about this dramatic form as an ongoing concern of contemporary life. As in the words of Steve Tillis,

...folk drama might be present throughout a culture, employing of any social rank who use texts that might either be freshly composed or have a basis in literature, and whose performances are an ongoing concern of contemporary life. (35)

Indian theatrical tradition goes back to antiquity and is deeply rooted within local culture and consciousness. Therefore, it has its own uniqueness and structure that is truly eastern in its orientation. The theatrical traditions of India are divided into Loka dharmi (the popular), the folk, which includes Nautanki of Punjab and Swang of Himachal Pradesh and the Natyadharmi (the traditional), the classical, based on ancient texts on drama, like the Bharatanatyam. Several characteristics delineate the classical and the folk. The classical performances of India are based on a set of codified laws, such as those of the Natyashastra, but at the same time are "open" to interpretation. The Natyashastra (800 A.D.) is an ancient Indian treatise on drama, written in Sanskrit that is the foundation for not just the classical dances but also most of the theatrical dance forms prevalent in the country such as Kuttiyatam of Kerala, Ankiya Nat, Ramlila and Raslila of Uttar Pradesh and Terukootu, of Tamil Nadu and Chhau of Eastern India.

This demarcation unfortunately has given the classical arts an "high and elitist definition. It's time to rethink and reconsider what is "high" and "low" after all? Its time for a

change in thinking, for reconsideration and perhaps a redefinition to all arts in general. The future students and communities of practitioners now need to speak in favor of all arts, it's time to think act now and implement the much needed change now!

# Shabd Leela – The Interplay of Words / Manohar Khushalani



Text of The Review by Manohar Khushalani Published in IIC Diary

Directed by K K Raina, conceived, scripted and narrated in Hindi by Ila Arun, '**Shabd Leela**' is a partially dramatized reading of the script, which contains selected extracts from the works of the well-known poet and playwright **Dr. Dharamvir Bharti**. Picking up prose from his works, such as, '*Kanupriya*', '*Ek Sahityik Ke Prem Patra*' and '*Andha Yug*', Ila

Arun created a biographical sketch of Bharti, focusing on his relationship with two women. Trying to see a resonance from Krishna's life, wherein, even though Rukmani was his wife, yet, only Radha's name is linked with Krishna and taken together with his. Ila justifies Dharamvir's simultaneous dalliance with his first wife, Kanta Bharti and Pushpa Bharti, his paramour, who became his spouse in an informal unconventional ceremony. The three, Dharamvir Kanta and Pushpa, took a vow on the banks of Ganges, that they will always be inseparable. That is why the unconventional consensual bigamous wedlock had a certain mystical piety about it. Yet, in the construction of the play, Kanta, his first wife, and the third arm of the triangle, was largely ignored.

Ila took up the role of the '*Sutradhar*', allowing Raina to dramatize the play, unsuccessfully though, because the blocking had a static quality about it. A symmetrical set consisting of two desks on either side of the stage and a covered bench in the middle added to the monotony.

However, the visuals projected on the cyclorama were really beautiful and carefully chosen by the Director to enhance the beauty of the poems. The script was well crafted, interspersing quotes from the letters, poetry and drama, with Ila's own critique about them. Actors Rajeswari Sachdev, Varun Badola and all the others read out the pedantic Hindi verses and prose with well punctuated, clearly pronounced dialogue delivery.

The finale of the play was a performance of *Andhayug*. It highlights the last day of the Mahabharata war, when Kurukshetra was covered with corpses, the ramparts were in ruins, the city was in flames, while vultures hovered menacingly above. The few hapless survivors of the defeated Kauravas were overcome with grief and rage. Written immediately after the partition of the India, the play is a profound commentary on the politics of violence. True, *Andhayug* showcases Bharti's versatility as a writer craftsman,

but, the conclusion appeared to be a departure from the overall theme of the enactment of a complex relationship between three creative and sensitive souls.

Despite everything, the pristine beauty of Bharti's Shabd Leela is what remains with you after the performance

Let the whole world know that Radha;  
was not merely a note in your Song-  
Radha was The Melody, The Music;  
I have come to you my Dearest!  
You who weaved fiery blossoms into my tresses!  
Tarry not anymore;  
To weave meaning into History!

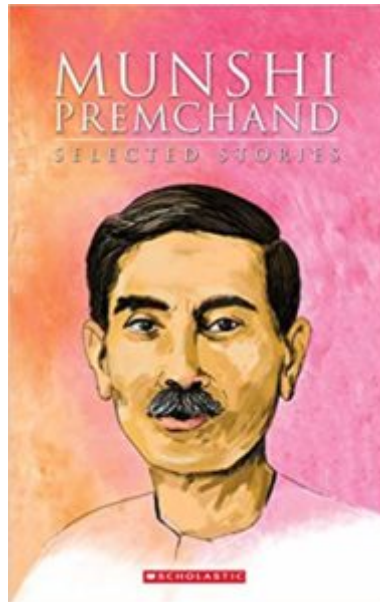
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## **Everything Personal – a taut and gripping play | Manohar Khushalani**

The latest new playwright to hit the horizon is Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, a seasoned journalist; whose first play, 'Everything Personal', was presented by Yatrik under the direction of Bhaskar Ghosh. Incidentally, all the three plays were produced by the India International Center, though the first two were presented by Ruchika Theatre Group at IIC earlier.

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# Rajendranath's Play on Stories of Premchand | Manohar Khushalani



## A Review by Prof. Manohar Khushalani

IICs Annual Day was celebrated with a fitting tribute to Munshi Premchand by dramatic renditions of four of his most well known short stories directed by Rajinder Nath and presented by Nepathya Foundation. All the four plays were really heartwarming epitomized by the Director's deft presentation, which was minimalistic and intellectually stimulating, thus doing justice to the author's own style of writing. Competent performances by all the actors, especially Mala Kumar, Rekha Johri, Animesh Singhal and Gaurav Sehgal propelled the play.

Known as a pragmatist, social reality and pathos has been the focus of Premchand's writings, which was also emulated by two of the plays performed that day; Shanti and Satgati. But, pathos isn't the only emotion he could write about. In 'Moteram Ji Shastri', the story of a lovable charlatan, who, like Moliere's Mock Doctor, gives us twinkle-eyed humour of

unbelievable situations. But, despite his wife's warnings, of not getting entangled with women, Moteram ends up becoming the Queen's physician, enchanting her with his gift of poetic gab, only to be kicked unceremoniously out by the guards.

Bade Bhai Sahab, a light-hearted story of sibling rivalry between two brothers, one of whom is five years elder to the other. While the elder brother is prone to sermonize the younger one; on the need to take studies seriously, much to his own embarrassment, the younger one catches up with him as he gets promoted each year. Unfortunately, the older one stays put in the same class. Charmingly enacted, the mirthful story ends with food for thought. Is educational qualification really superior to wisdom laden experience?

Published earlier in IIC Diary

## Dramatised Stories of Premchand

### IIC ANNUAL DAY

*Stories of Premchand.*

*Directed by Rajinder Nath*

*Presented by Nepathya Foundation*

**22 January 2019**

The IIC Annual Day was celebrated with a tribute to Munshi Premchand. It featured dramatic renditions of four of his best-known short stories, directed by Rajinder Nath and presented by Nepathya Foundation. All the four plays were heartwarming, epitomised by the director's deft presentation, which was minimalistic and intellectually stimulating, thus doing justice to the author's own style of writing. Competent performances by all the actors, especially Mala Kumar, Rekha Johri, Animesh Singhal and Gaurav Sehgal, propelled the play.

Known as a pragmatist, social reality and pathos have been the focus of Premchand's writings, and two of the plays performed that day, *Shanti* and *Satgati*, reflected this. But pathos isn't the only emotion he could write about. *Moteram Ji Shastri* is the humorous story of a lovable charlatan, who like Moliere's Mock Doctor, gives us twinkley-eyed humour of unbelievable situations. Despite his wife's warnings of not getting entangled with women, Moteram ends up becoming the Queen's physician, enchanting her with his gift of poetic prattle, only to be unceremoniously kicked out by the guards.

*Bade Bhai Sahab* is a light-hearted story of sibling rivalry between two brothers. While the elder brother is prone to sermonising the younger one to take his studies seriously, much to his embarrassment, the younger one catches up with him as he gets promoted each year. Unfortunately, the older one remains in the same class. Charmingly enacted, the mirthful story ends with food for thought. Is educational qualification really superior to wisdom-laden experience?

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI



Performance of *Moteram J Shastri*



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CamScanner

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# Women Against War | Manohar Khushalani



NSD Play Directed by Waman Kendre

A review by **Manohar Khushalani**

First Published in IIC Diary

National School of Drama's "*Ghazab Teri Ada*", an anti-war play, adapted from Aristophane's Greek comedy, *Lysistrata*, was staged at IIC. Adaptation, music design and direction is by Waman Kendre and light design by Suresh Bharadwaj. The play was initially performed at NSD as a tribute to war victims around the centenary of World War I. However, with the prevailing war psychosis, the play has contemporary relevance too. Taking a cue from the Greek play, first performed in classical Athens in 411 BC, which was a comic account of one woman's extraordinary mission to end the Peloponnesian War, the protagonist of the Hindi play, Laya, convinces the wives of soldiers, to withdraw sexual favours to their husbands, until they agree to desist from fighting the War Mongering King's battles. In the non-violent protest, even the Queen is co-opted. In order to seal all alternatives for men, even the lady brothel-keeper is made a co-conspirator. There

are hilarious scenes of desperate men trying to win favours first from their wives and later, in futility, from the women in the brothel. Even the King is brought on his knees by the Queen. The play ends with the soldiers laying down their arms.

The racy musical, with a folk flavor, has been intricately designed by Kendre. The women's protest, was unusually orchestrated with strident ringing of hand held temple bells, in a martial style. He avoided the obvious *Ghungroo*, realizing that it was more a symbol of femininity than feminism.



The Review Published in IIC Diary

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## Epic Narrative in Regional Theatre Traditions of South

# India | Manohar Khushalani

**Event: A Talk by Prof. Paula Richman**

**Learning from Performance: Epic Narrative in Regional Theatre Traditions of South India**

Venue: Seminar Rooms I & II, Kamaladevi Complex at IIC

Date: Sept. 7 2013

First Published in IIC Diary Sept-Oct 2013 Issue



Paula Richman, Danforth Professor of South Asian Religions at Oberlin

College in Ohio, USA, gave a talk on Learning from Performance using Epic

Narrative in Regional Theatre Traditions of South India. Supporting her as

the moderator was Prof. Rustom Bharucha, from the School of Arts and

Aesthetics, JNU, where Paula is also doing a short term Fellowship.

Richman's passion for Ramayana is well known, so much so, that her name

has become synonymous with the topic. Paula has travelled to many parts of

the world in hot pursuit of the 'Many Ramayanas ', which is also the title of

one of her books. According to her, people for whom Ramayana is central

now live throughout the globe in countries as diverse as South Africa, Trinidad, Surinam United Kingdom, Australia, USA, Canada, parts of Europe, besides South East Asia, “it has indeed become a global text as well as a global piece of theatre” she added. But the subject of her current research was South India.

She began her talk with a Tamil ‘Morning Sickness Song’, relating to Queen Kausalya’s condition when she was pregnant with her son Rama. The song describes rituals that King Dasharatha and other women performed to support her during her pregnancy, and her food cravings too. One day she wants murukku, then idli, as another woman wants dosas! Idlis in Ayodhya? Sounds weird, but, Tamilians can relate more easily to pregnant women who crave for local dishes. Indian folklore believes in anthropomorphism. It brings Gods closer by imagining that they behave like humans.

Paula also discussed a Kattaikkuttu play called RamaRavana. It expressed the yearning for virtuous governance. One of its songs talks about how people are still waiting to have an ideal, fair, and compassionate leader rule – somewhat reminiscent of Ram Rajya.

Richman hopped from one topic to another as she gushed about Yakshagana dance-dramas of coastal Karnataka and finally, about how the legendary

actress Usha Nangiar enacted the role of Mandodari in one of her performances.

Her underlining thrust was that live performances offer new ways of understanding the experiences of Ramayana characters.

talk diary

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**A New Paradigm of Development**  
TALK: *Sustainable Development – Imperatives for India*  
Speaker: Dr. R.K. Pachauri  
Chair: Professor P.S. Ramakrishnan  
October 30

The developmental model of advanced nations based upon technological innovations that provided goods and services at less cost had resulted in the over-exploitation of natural resources, thus endangering the eco-system and supplanting human values by emphasising consumption and possession. The finiteness of resources, projected by the Club of Rome study, remained unacknowledged. The hazard of seeking infinite growth led to climatic change which would grow worse if ignored. Dr. Pachauri, chairman of the Inter-Government Group on Climate Change, is uniquely qualified to raise an alarm caused by the reduction of Arctic sea ice, thus raising the sea level by almost one metre, a threat to the island nations of the Maldives and Kiribati.

In order to deal with threats, he proposed a change in paradigm, out-of-the-box thinking, and solutions that cause less strain on natural resources. Since resources are not available for power plants and transmission losses make technology unaffordable for the poor, he opts for micro-grids that would provide lighting, perfect combustion with a blower that increases the efficiency of cooking with improved stoves, and the churning of milk with solar devices. He bids for public transport that would reduce the demand for fossil fuels and strain upon imports.

Whereas there are diverse agents of change at multiple layers in society, the government must take the initiative in creating healthy competition among innovators by assuring the demand of substantial quantities to encourage entrepreneurs to invest in technologies. The state pollution control boards ought to be accountable to people and not the government alone. A different kind of leadership that is visionary, responsible, and dedicated to humanitarian impulses is required for creating public awareness of hazards, dissemination of success stories, encouraging public transport, and water harvesting. India can surely show the way.

▪ P.S. BAWA

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**Epics and Theatre Traditions**  
TALK: *Learning from Performance – Epic Narrative in Regional Theatre Traditions of South India*  
Speaker: Professor Paula Richman  
Chair: Professor Rustom Bharucha  
Collaboration: Lila Foundation, September 7

Paula Richman's passion for the *Ramayana* is well-known, so much so, that her name has become synonymous with the topic. Paula has travelled to many parts of the world in hot pursuit of the *Many Ramayanas*, which is also the title of one of her books. According to her, people for whom the *Ramayana* is central now live throughout the globe in countries as diverse as South Africa, Trinidad, Surinam, United Kingdom, Australia, USA, Canada, parts of Europe, besides South East Asia: 'it has indeed become a global text as well as a global piece of theatre', she added. But the subject of her current research is South India.

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▪ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

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# DU Professor and Thespian Lola Chatterji Passes Away



**Lola Chatterji (26 July 1924 – 5 June 2019)**

Lola Chatterji, who died peacefully on 5th June 2019 was a well-recognized figure in theatre circles in the capital. As a member of the English Department at Miranda House for over two decades, she was involved in many theatre productions in Delhi University in the sixties and seventies. Among the plays she directed or co-directed at Miranda House were: Easter (Strindberg), The Rape of the Belt (Levy), The Member of the Wedding (McCullers), Ring Round the Moon (Anouilh), Mourning Becomes Electra (O'Neill), and The Importance of Being Earnest (Wilde). She was also closely involved as staff advisor and mentor in three plays put up by DUMADS (Delhi University Music And Drama Society): Rhinoceros (Ionesco), A Man for All Seasons (Robert Bolt), and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Stoppard).

Lola's life-long interest in the theatre continued for many

years after her retirement. She served for many years as Vice President of the Shakespeare Society of India and as a board member of Yatrik. She was particularly known for her make-up skills. There would e few actors in Delhi University theatre or in Yatrik who did not have their make-up doen by her.

A memorial event for Lola Chatterji will be held on 4th July 2019 at 6:30 pm in the Multipurpose Hall, Kamladevi Wing, India International Centre, New Delhi. All are cordially invited to the event