

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.

Natsamrat Delights Audiences

with a Blend of Comedy, Drama, and Social Messages



Delhi based Natsamrat once again brought comedy filled plays for the audience. Plays written by Anton Chekhov, Moliere and Satya Prakash were staged under the direction of Shyam Kumar. On 2nd and 5th October such plays were staged in LTG Auditorium (Blank Canvas), Mandi House, New Delhi in which the director also tried to give a message to the society through his plays and that message touched the hearts of the audience.

On 2nd October two plays were staged. The first play "The Proposal" written by Anton Chekhov was staged. This is the story of a young man who proposes marriage to his neighbour's unmarried daughter. The story gets worse when the three of them start arguing about whose property it is and whose dog is better.

The play "Kallu Nai MBBS" written by Moliere was staged. The audience gathered in large numbers for the presentation of the

play. The audience applauded every dialogue. All the characters played their roles well.

The gist of the play is that a barber is always drunk and beats his wife. The barber's wife promises herself that she will teach her husband a lesson. Meanwhile, she meets a servant who is looking for a doctor to treat their master's daughter's dumbness. The barber's wife tells him that there is such a doctor here, but he does not consider himself a doctor until he is beaten up properly. The servant beat the barber and force him to become a doctor and take him to his master. Later on, the play takes a very good turn.

On 5 October, again "The Proposal" play was staged along with "Kambakht Ishq" written by Satya Prakash. In today's time, life has become so busy that children do not have time for their parents, due to which their parents start falling ill. Especially when someone's mother is alone and someone's father is alone. The story of the play Kambakht Ishq touched the hearts of the audience along with laughter because somewhere probably everyone was finding themselves in the same place which was being shown in the play.

Artists Vishwajeet, Munmun, Arvind Shandilya, Sudhir Khanna, Aman Kumar, Soumya Yadav, Shivangi and Raman Kumar played their roles very well. Stage Managers Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh, Set Managers Naushad and Rohit Prasad, Make-up artist Payal and Rajrani, Costume assistants Chhobi Saha and Rekha Devi, Music Operated by Vansh Rathore and light design by Natsamrat's director Shyam Kumar.

Indian Perspective and Challenges in Modern Theater Writing: Seminar held at Kala Sankul



29 September, New Delhi – In order to promote art and literature, the monthly theatre seminar organised by Sanskar Bharti, Delhi was organised at 'Kala Sankul'. The main theme of this seminar was 'Indian perspective and challenges in modern theatre writing'. Director of National School of Drama (NSD) Chittaranjan Tripathi and senior theatre critic Anil Goyal were present as keynote speakers.

In his speech, Chittaranjan Tripathi expressed deep concern over the current state of Indian theatre institutions and writing. He said that in today's time there is a huge shortage of writing material, which does not present the society and Indian perspective in the right way. He stressed that the study of Indian epics like Mahabharata is very important to understand the art, culture and history of India. According to Tripathi, today's youth is interested in theatre, but it is very important to write keeping Indianness at the centre.

He also discussed the tradition of folk theatre and said, "When we understand the folk, we will be able to make theatre better too." Explaining the importance of folk theatre, he said that it is a genre that is born and survives among the common people, which develops by keeping their life and behaviour at the centre.

Drama critic Anil Goyal also expressed his views on the Indian theatre tradition and criticised the wrong portrayal of history by some theatre writers of the past decades. He described the lack of young theatre writers as the biggest challenge of the present times. Goyal said, "The theatre world has always felt the lack of good writers. The film world may have got better writers, but this lack can be clearly seen in the theatre field."

It was also discussed in the seminar that in the desire for political correctness, difficult and complex issues did not find a place in plays. Referring to the writings based on the wars of 1962 and 1971, he said that films were made on these historical events, but effective plays were not written.

The program was inaugurated by National Organization Minister of Sanskar Bharati Abhijit Gokhale, Director of National School of Drama (NSD) Chittaranjan Tripathi, Senior Critic Anil Goyal, Kuldeep Sharma. Ashok Tiwari, Digvijay Singh, Registrar of NSD P.K. Mohanty and Deputy Registrar O.P. Sagar were present.

The presence of many Senior Theatre Director's like Mr. Ramdayal Sharma, Avtar Sahni, J.P. Singh, Rohit Tripathi, Chandrakanta Tripathi, Shyam Kumar, Raj Upadhyay, Bhupesh Joshi and Vashisht Upadhyay made the program special. The successful organization of the program was a proof of the dedication of all the members of Sanskar Bharati.

This seminar proved to be an important platform for Indian theatre, where serious discussions were held on the current

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Corruption, Comedy, and Music: Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal Enthralls Delhi Audience



On the 14th and 15th of September, *Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal* was staged by New Delhi Performers at Alliance Française de Delhi, Lodi Estate, New Delhi, under the direction of Basab Bhattacharya. This musical comedy play, a Hindi adaptation of the renowned Marathi play *Vichha Majhi Puri Kara*, originally written by Vasant Sabnis and translated into Hindi by Usha Banerjee, focused on the theme of corruption. Through humor, music, and lively performances, the play delivered sharp satire.

Performed by the talented cast of *New Delhi Performers*, the play balanced entertainment with a strong message. It offered incisive commentary on power, greed, the inefficiency of administrative systems, making critical observations through its humorous lens.

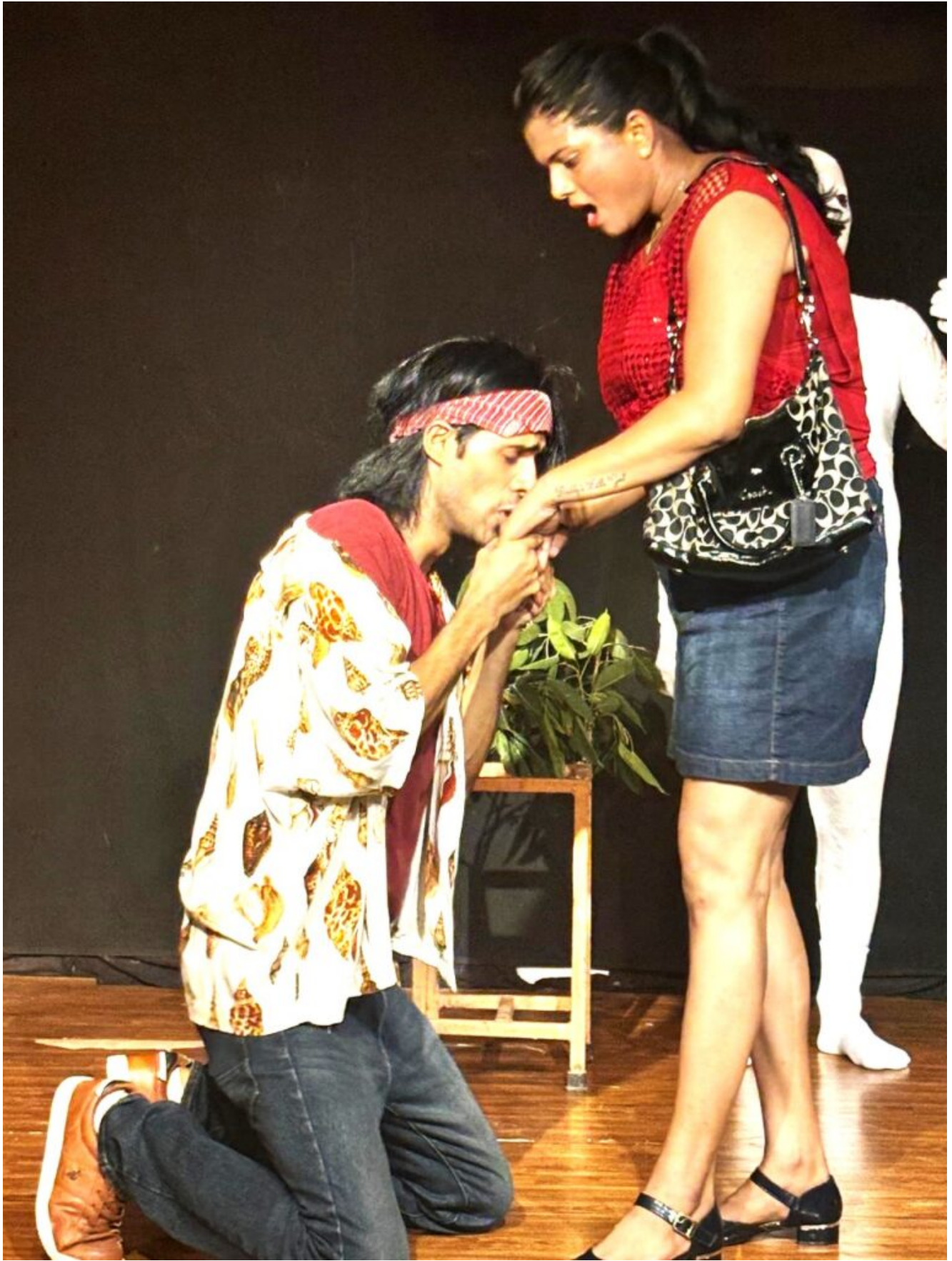
The music and dance elements were key in keeping the audience engaged. The main objective of the play highlighting corruption through satire was successfully conveyed. Costumes and choreography were commendable, adding a vibrant touch to

the performances. The inclusion of contemporary film songs connected the play to the present day, allowing the audience to relate to the storyline more effectively.

The performances were a highlight, with Dhruv Sharma playing Maharaj, Animesh Singhal as Hawaldar, Arpan Arora in the role of Pradhan, and Abhishek as the energetic Sipahi. Chetna portrayed Mainavati, while Ritwik Marwah took on the role of Kotwal. Saurabh Bhutoria, in the role of Sakhiya, won the audience's applause with his stellar performance. The narrators, Hardik and Sheetal Marwah, added a guiding presence to the story. Behind the scenes, Vedant and Rinki lent their voices, while Dinesh played the harmonium and Harsh took charge of the dholak. Ved Deep led the Music, and Ritesh handled the lighting design.

Overall, *Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal* offered an engaging musical experience where the blend of music and lively performances drove the story forward. The cast's energetic presentation ensured that the audience left the theater entertained and impressed.

“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.

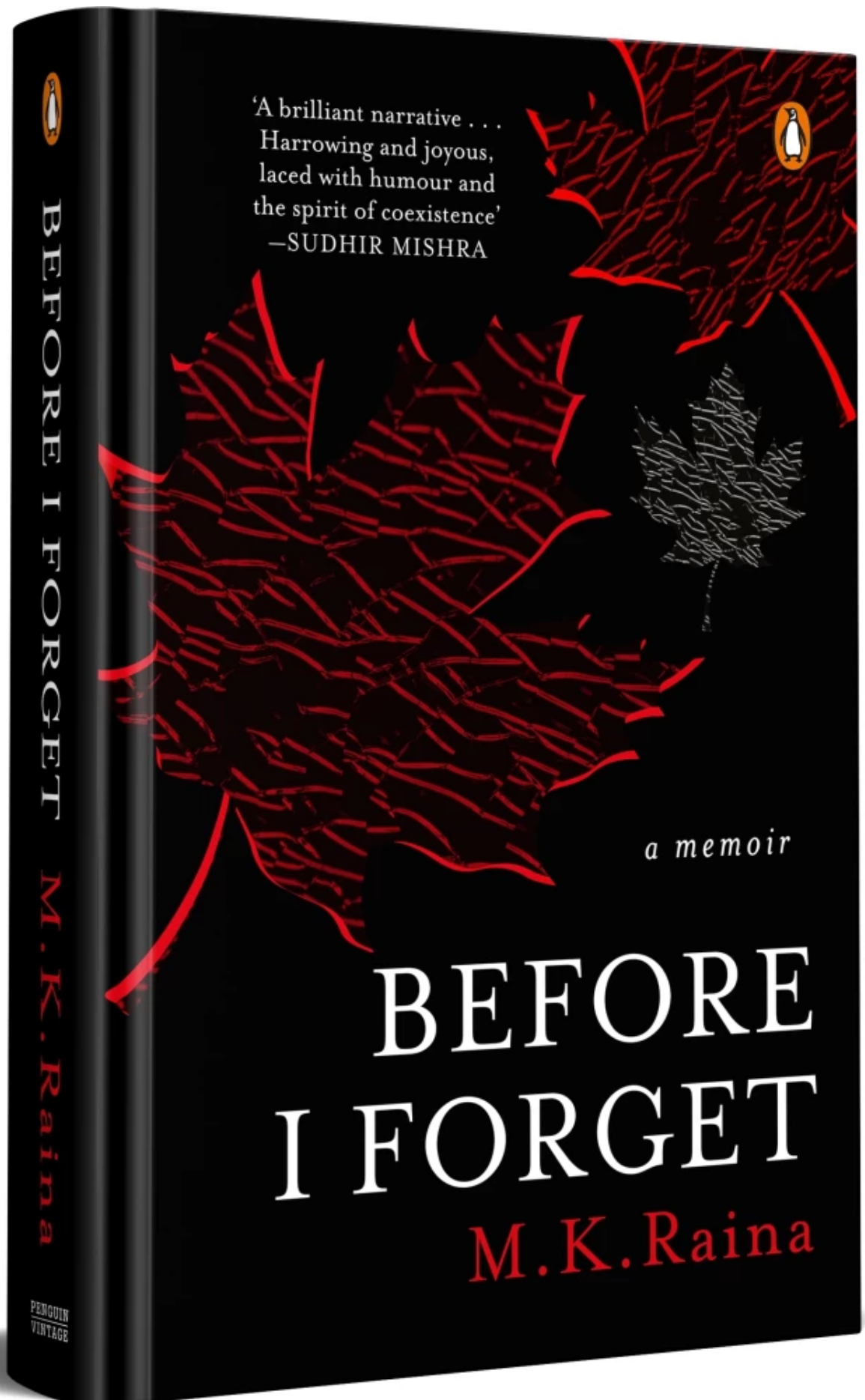
The play, while tickling the audience's funny bones, conveyed a profound message relevant to today's youth.

An Unforgettable Book

Discussion Conducted by Sujata and Oroon

Conversations: Before I Forget

Reviewed by **Manohar Khushalani**



'A brilliant narrative . . .
Harrowing and joyous,
laced with humour and
the spirit of coexistence'
—SUDHIR MISHRA

a memoir

BEFORE I FORGET

M.K. Raina

PENGUIN
VINTAGE

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

A Rich Tapestry of Events and Anecdotes

TALE: *Before I Forget*
CONVERSATION BETWEEN: M.K. Raina, Sulekh Prasad, and Deepan Das
COLLABORATOR: Akhshay
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 narrative begins with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Shadal Nathi Saffa Mahala, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace, and his formative education at Lal Dool Primary School. This nostalgic recollection provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

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 suicide of Kashmiri Pandits during the period is another painful memory, highlighting the erosion of communal bonds.

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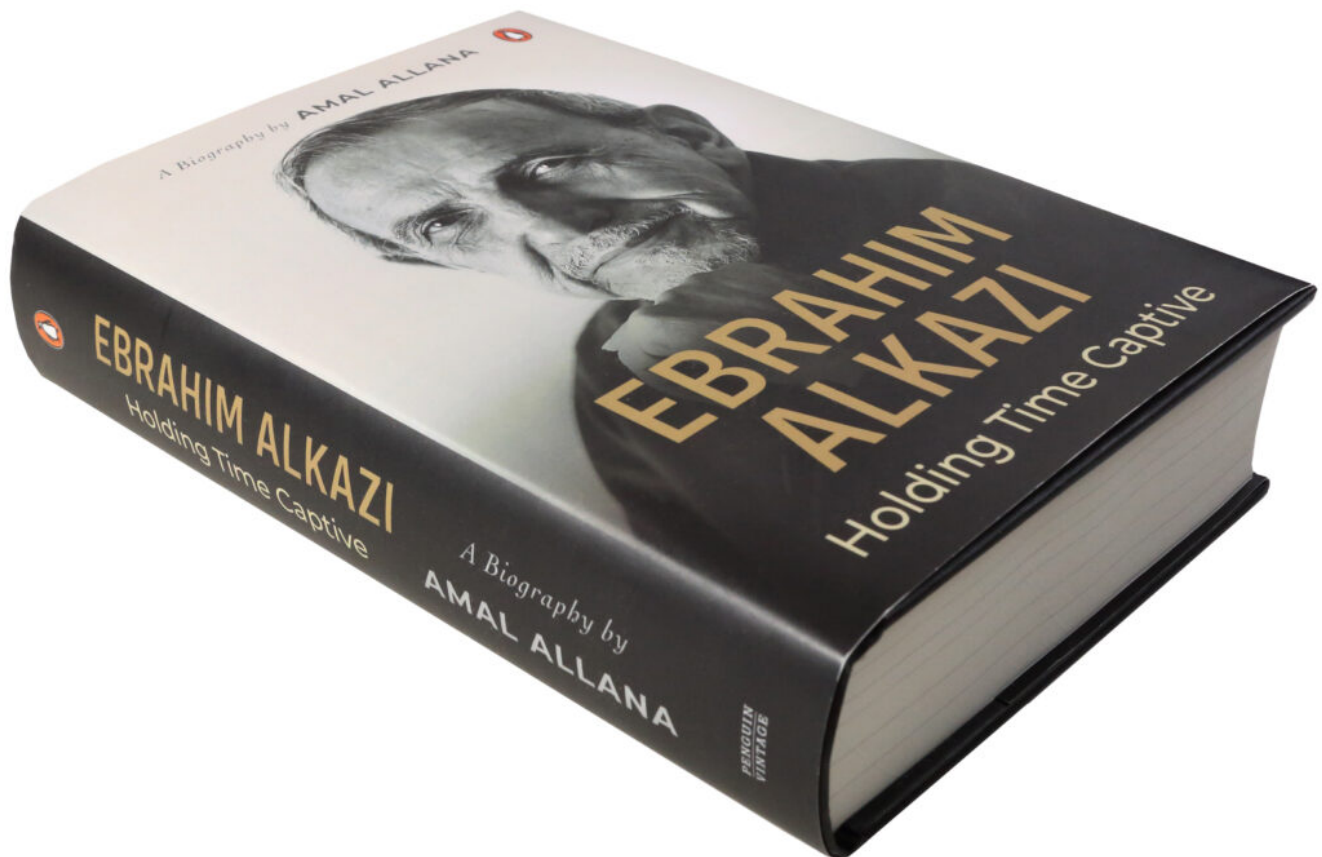
Before I Forget is a testament to Raina's dedication to his craft and cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict.

MANOHAR KHUSHALANI



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

An Uninhibited Tale of a Towering Thespian

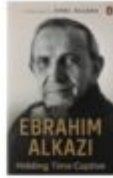
BOOK LAUNCH: *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive* by Anam Alkazi (Penguin Random House, 2024)

DISCUSSANTS: Anam Alkazi in conversation with Anam F. Alkazi

READINGS BY: Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer

COLLABORATION: Penguin Random House

22 March 2024



The search and discovery of a multilayered narrative, *Ebrahim Alkazi: Holding Time Captive*, also rights the life and legacy of Ebrahim Alkazi, a towering figure in 20th-century Indian theatre and visual arts. Anam Alkazi, 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.

Alkazi, renowned as a theatre director and pedagogue, passed away at the age of 84, leaving behind a monumental legacy in Indian theatre. 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 Naseemuddin 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 theatre.

As the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama (NSD), Alkazi revolutionised Hindi theatre with his visionary approach and technical precision. His establishment of the NSD Repertory Company and the School of Dramatic Arts, Mumbai, showcased his commitment to nurturing talent and promoting theatrical excellence. Beyond theatre, Alkazi's influence extended to the visual arts, as evidenced by his founding of the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi with his wife, Rubina Alkazi.

Alkazi's biography not only celebrates his father's professional achievements but also delves unflinchingly into his personal life, providing a nuanced portrait of the multifaceted individual. Through interviews, archival research and personal recollections, Alkazi, 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, moderated by Sonam Kalia, further enriched the narrative, with Anam engaging in conversation about her father's legacy and the process of writing his biography. Dramatic readings by Sonam Kalia and Rehan Engineer added depth and resonance to the event, underscoring the theatricality inherent in Alkazi's life and work.

The book stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a cultural icon. Alkazi'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.

• **MANISHA KUNDHARAM**

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.

