Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar” – A Powerful Confluence of History, Grace and Dramatic Sensitivity



Presented by the Hindi Academy, Delhi, the play **“Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar”** emerged as a compelling blend of historical narrative, dignity and emotional depth, commemorating the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar. Staged on 19th November, 2025 at the L.T.G. Auditorium, the production not only illuminated her exemplary courage and administrative acumen but also brought alive her profound humanitarian vision.

The event gained special prominence with the presence of **Hon’ble Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs. Rekha Gupta**, **Mr. Kapil Mishra** (Hon’ble Minister, Department of Art, Culture &

Language, Delhi), and **Mrs. Bansuri Swaraj**. Their presence elevated the cultural stature of the evening and energized the audience.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Chief Minister **Mrs. Rekha Gupta** highlighted Ahilyabai's life, her benevolent leadership and her unwavering commitment to justice. She noted that in ancient times women enjoyed education and equal rights, but circumstances changed drastically after the arrival of the Mughals—leading to restrictions and seclusion. In such a period, Ahilyabai stood as a shining example of strength, wisdom and progressive thought.

Hon'ble Minister **Mr. Kapil Mishra** and **Ms. Bansuri Swaraj** also emphasized the need to bring Ahilyabai Holkar's ideals to the forefront, stating that her life continues to inspire society even today.

The event was further graced by **Guest Mrs. Rashmi Singh (IAS)**, Secretary – Department of Art, Culture & Language. Under the leadership of **Mr. Sanjay Kumar Garg**, Secretary of the Hindi Academy, the entire programme unfolded with grace and coherence. All dignitaries appreciated the artistic excellence of "Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar".

The play's director **Rohit Tripathi** transformed the narrative into a visually engaging experience with refined staging, balanced emotional transitions and well-structured dramatic movements. Writer **Mukesh Jha** brought historical events to life with clarity, flow and an engaging dramatic texture. Despite the narrative's breadth and the many characters involved, the presentation remained cohesive, gradually rising in intensity and drawing the audience closer to the towering personality of Ahilyabai.



In the lead role, **Shampa Mandal** delivered a restrained yet powerful performance, capturing Ahilyabai's resilience, compassion and unshakeable resolve. Her expressions, dialogue delivery and emotional precision made the character truly come alive.
Disha Gupta, as young Ahilya, added depth and charm through her expressive performance and graceful movements.

As Malharrao, **Sharad Tyagi** portrayed calm authority and dignified strength, leaving a lasting impact. **Guneet Singh** (as Khanderao) and **Nirbhaya Kartavya** (as Tukoji Rao, Vishwas Rao) brought emotional complexity and internal conflict to their characters with impressive conviction.

Despite the large ensemble, each artist—
Shikha Arya, Aryan Mavi, Gagan, Jai Prakash, Ankit Chaudhary, Aryan Singh, Mayur, Dhananjay, Sachin, Kritika Gaur, Ridhaan Gaur, Mohammad Siraj, and Ayushi Tripathi—maintained energy, rhythm and continuity throughout, helping the historical canvas unfold seamlessly on stage.

The backstage team added commendable depth to the production:

- **Chandrakanta Tripathi’s costumes** preserved historical authenticity,
- **Tiara Tripathi’s choreography** infused visual elegance and rhythm,
- **Rajeev Ranjan’s music** enriched the emotional atmosphere.

This production by **Upstage Art Group, Delhi**, stands as a testament to how research, sensitive writing and cohesive direction can transform history from something that is merely narrated into something profoundly *experienced*.
The play reminded the audience that Ahilyabai was not just a ruler—she was a true **Lokmata**, whose compassion and strength still resonate across generations

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Natsamrat’s Theatrical Showcase: A Vibrant Tapestry of Emotion, Satire, and Humour



On May 24, 31, and June 1, Delhi's L.T.G. Auditorium at Mandi House came alive with a rich blend of theatre as Natsamrat, a prominent performing arts group, presented a trio of compelling plays. Each piece offered a distinct flavour—ranging from heartfelt drama to sharp satire and uproarious comedy—beautifully reflecting the artistic breadth and emotional depth of contemporary Indian theatre.

Tender Reflections: Kambakht Ishq

Staged on May 31 at 3:00 PM, Kambakht Ishq, penned by Satyaprakash, offered a poignant look into the emotional needs of the elderly. Through the lives of two aging individuals coping with loneliness, the play delicately unraveled themes of companionship, vulnerability, and the quiet ache of growing old. With subtle dialogue and restrained yet powerful performances, the production struck a deep emotional chord with its audience, rendering it one of the most moving performances of the festival.

Comic Wit and Social Satire: The Proposal

Staged twice—on May 24 at 11:30 AM and again on June 1 at 3:00 PM—Anton Chekhov's iconic one-act play The Proposal was brought to life with remarkable flair. What begins as a simple marriage proposal spirals hilariously into a heated argument over land and pets. The actors' crisp comic timing, expressive

body language, and fluid stage presence transformed the absurdity into biting social satire. It was a delightful reminder that laughter, when layered with irony, becomes a powerful mirror to societal quirks.

Laughter with a Message: Kallu Nai MBBS

Inspired by Molière's classic farce and performed on May 24 at 12:30 PM, May 31 and June 1 at 4:15 PM, Kallu Nai MBBS followed the misadventures of a drunk barber who is forcibly made to act as a doctor. Behind the laugh-out-loud moments lay darker undertones of domestic abuse and the systemic marginalization of women. The fast-paced narrative, witty dialogues, and exaggerated characters created a comic spectacle that managed to entertain while prompting deeper thought.

Direction and Technical Excellence

All three plays were skillfully directed by **Shyam Kumar**, whose vision and theatrical sensibility were evident in the seamless staging. The ensemble cast—Vishwajeet, Munmun, Shivangi, Aman Kumar, Dhananjay, Raman Kumar, Rajan, and Saumya—delivered heartfelt and dynamic performances. Behind the scenes, the production team added immense value: Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh (stage management), Himanshu and Nisha (assistant stage managers), Payal and Raj Rani (makeup), Rohit Prasad and Rekha Devi (costumes), and Vansh Rathore (music coordination).

Natsamrat's theatrical offering was more than a cultural event—it was a celebration of theatre's power to evoke, provoke, and connect. Through humour, emotion, and satire, the festival reminded us that the stage is not just a space for performance, but a living, breathing dialogue with society itself.

Reviving a Queen’s Legacy: Theatrical Tribute to Ahilyabai Holkar



(A Review Based on a Conversation with Director Rohit Tripathi)

On 31st May 2025, the two-day theatre festival was organized by Sanskar Bharti, Panchkula, commenced with a powerful and evocative performance of “**Ahilyabai Holkar**” by **Upstage Art Group** at the Atma Auditorium of Jainendra Gurukul School, Panchkula. The play brought to life the extraordinary story of a visionary queen – a social reformer, protector of Dharma, and a skilled strategist – who rose above the constraints of a

patriarchal society to lead her kingdom with wisdom, compassion, and unwavering moral strength.

More than a retelling of history, the production served as a mirror to contemporary society. It reflected timeless themes of women empowerment, religious tolerance, and justice-driven governance. Ahilyabai was not merely portrayed as a ruler, but as a “Lokmata” – the revered mother of the people – who embodied the balance between tradition and progressive change.

Director Rohit Tripathi, in a conversation following the performance, emphasized that the production aimed to present Ahilyabai’s life not as a distant legend, but as a living, breathing inspiration for today’s audience. His strong visual language, disciplined stagecraft, and seamless scene transitions gave the play a grand yet intimate presence. The actors’ coordination and spatial awareness maintained a fluid rhythm throughout, keeping the audience deeply engaged.

Playwright Mukesh Jha infused the script with emotionally resonant dialogues and a well-structured dramatic arc. Through Ahilyabai’s character, he challenged entrenched societal evils like the *Sati* tradition, the denial of women’s education, and the suppression of female agency. His writing was both poetic and purposeful.

Sanpa Mandal’s portrayal of Ahilyabai was nothing short of commanding. Her voice modulation, physical poise, and expressive gaze captured the grace, resolve, and inner turmoil of a leader burdened with duty.
Sharad Tyagi convincingly embodied Malharrao, lending gravitas to the fatherly mentor figure.
Divyanshu brought youthful intensity and idealistic conflict to the role of Khanderao, while Shikha Arya as Gautamibai added warmth and quiet strength.
The supporting cast – Nirbhay, Mohit Bajaj, Sahil Nirola, Vijay Kumar, Arun Amay, Piyush Dwivedi, and Priya Rai – performed their roles with commendable dedication and natural

energy.

Costume design by Chandrakanta was both period-appropriate and visually impactful, grounding the characters in historical realism.
Rajeev Ranjan’s music score elevated the emotional cadence of the play, blending traditional motifs with a contemporary sensibility.
Lighting and stage design created striking tableaus, particularly in scenes depicting the royal court, battlefield, and moments of grief.

With an audience of over 500 in attendance, the performance concluded to a resounding standing ovation. This reception was not merely an appreciation of production quality, but a testament to how deeply the story resonated with the viewers.

“Ahilyabai Holkar” stood not simply as a historical drama, but as a powerful reminder of the enduring legacy of moral courage, cultural wisdom, and feminine leadership. It served as a beacon for modern India, where the values of compassion, discipline, and reform still need strong voices.

Rohit Tripathi and his team have not just staged a play – they have revived a legacy. Their effort ensures that the spirit of Ahilyabai Holkar will continue to inspire generations, both on stage and beyond.

Katha Ek Kans Ki: A Timeless Tale Told Anew



(April 22, 2025 – Brahmapur, Odisha | National Theatre Festival by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi)

In a special conversation at the NSD, Rohit Tripathi, senior theatre practitioner and founder of Upstage Art Group, spoke about his recently staged play ‘Katha Ek Kans Ki’.

The play was presented on April 22, 2025, as part of the National Theatre Festival organized by the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi at Biju Patnaik Cultural Auditorium in Brahmapur, Odisha. Written by Padma Shri Daya Prakash Sinha and directed by Rohit Tripathi, the play reimagines the mythological character Kans in a contemporary socio-political context.

Padma Shri Daya Prakash Sinha has skillfully retained the essence of Kans while presenting his character with deep psychological layers—on one side, he appears as a ruthless,

tyrannical ruler, and on the other, he emerges as a music lover, emotionally fragile, lonely, and vulnerable human being. This duality adds depth to the narrative, making the character complex and compelling. Through this mythological tale, the playwright reflects the contradictions, challenges, and dilemmas of our current times.

The role of Kans was portrayed with striking intensity by Sahil Singh Sethi, whose powerful stage presence left a lasting impression. The supporting cast—including Nitin Tyagi, Ujjwal Raj, Priya, Nikita Gupta, Abhishek, Arjun, Ritesh, Aryan, and Rajesh—also gave commendable performances. Backstage, Mukesh Jha contributed significantly to the smooth execution of the production.

During our conversation, Rohit Tripathi expressed that his commitment to theatre extends far beyond the stage. He shared that after the performance, when the return journey had to be arranged, none of the team had confirmed train tickets. In such a challenging situation, he personally arranged flight tickets for the entire cast and crew from his own funds. It is heartwarming to know that even today, there are directors who show such deep dedication not only to their art but also to their fellow artists.

Katha Ek Kans Ki is not just a mythological retelling—it is a relevant, thoughtful, and stirring theatrical creation that resonates deeply with the present.

Jogiya Raag a Saga of

Unwavering Faith and Silent Longing







On 26th April 2025, at the Sammukh Auditorium of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, the play “**Jogiya Raag”** was presented under the theatre festival “**Katharang**“, organized by the cultural organization Mailorang. Written by Vijay Pandit and directed by Prof. Devendra Raj Ankur, this production transformed a seemingly simple story into an extraordinary emotional experience on stage.

“Katharang” commenced on the same day with the stage being graced by the presence of senior theatre artist Mr. Amitabh Srivastava, who conducted the inaugural ceremony, and renowned literary figure Mr. Ashok Vajpeyi, who attended as the Chief Guest.

The story revolves around Savitri, a woman abandoned by her husband immediately after marriage as he renounces worldly life to become a hermit. Years pass as Savitri patiently waits for him, unwavering in her faith despite societal pressures. Eventually, in an act of poignant resignation, she accepts an unknown ascetic as her lost husband, surrendering herself to her destiny.

Nidhi Mishra, portraying the role of Savitri, delivered a truly exceptional performance. Her command over body movements, dialogue delivery, and the subtle expression of inner turmoil kept the audience deeply engrossed throughout the play. With remarkable ease and depth, she captured the complex emotions of hope, struggle, and despair dwelling within Savitri.

Mukti Das portrayed the character of Bal Mukund with great seriousness and authenticity. His restrained expression of internal conflict and the pain of renunciation, without falling into melodrama, added credibility and depth to his character. His dialogue delivery was composed and truthful, making his presence compelling on stage.

With only two actors on stage, multiple characters were

seamlessly brought to life through masterful variations in posture, movement, and voice modulation. This technical challenge was executed with impressive smoothness, making the character transitions natural and believable.

The innovative use of a simple prop – a saree – deserves special mention. Throughout the play, the saree symbolically transformed – representing femininity, sorrow, or the complex dynamics of shifting relationships, enhancing the thematic layers of the production.

Selection of the music that was played in the play by Sneha Kumar, deepening its mood and emotional texture. Nitin Bharadwaj's lighting design and its careful execution effectively elevated the story's atmosphere, aligning each scene with its emotional tone."

"Jogiya Raag" offered a profoundly moving theatrical experience. The balanced synergy of storytelling, direction, acting, and technical finesse elevated the performance to great artistic heights. The sensitive and sincere efforts of the team ensured that the audience remained deeply connected to the story from beginning to end.

This play is not merely the tale of Savitri's endless waiting and loyalty; it is also a beautiful exploration of human emotions, faith, and the silent resilience embedded in life's most difficult journeys.

An Inclusive Life



All my life I have kept an open, inclusive lifestyle. I feel that all should feel welcome and at home as this is how I was raised. I was raised by very open parenting and a household where even strangers who were met for the first time found a room with bed and food. My parents welcomed all with open arms without the slight feeling of them being strangers.

However this does not seem to be the case today. That inclusion I saw or many would have seen is changing in todays time. What is interesting here though is, many while choosing to be exclusive to people but inclusive to strangers on the social media. I am amused to see this change that we are willing to be open to a complete stranger to someone on social media who could misuse your generosity while we refuse to let the real into our lives.

We are getting so disconnected with the real person and also not willing to welcome them into our hearts and heaths that we are creating a social cocoon around ourselves. How can we feel a human content in that I wonder? It will make us slowly into

hermits with having friends with perhaps an synthetic generated text voice or an what we will paint as a perfect blend of a person with a hundred percent flawless face and body over the computer. We will spend hours on that since we will feel a strange sense of perfect fulfilment. Funny, we are only having conversations with our own voices of perfect words that the computer steals to generate a virtual reality which only entangles us.

I wish for the world to see the value in the closeness I hope to try to create with all. I hope that the myth of the perfect computer is destroyed within a body of an imperfect human. It is in that closeness I feel that we all can get to live within our truth. We will hence create a total willingness to be under no fallacy or mediated illusion of the other. Let us create only an life that creates a change of hope, connectedness and belongingness to all, with the help of the machine only and only to be help human kind.

Bhediya the Play Creating a New Medley



When we first start watching the play Bhediya (written by Dinesh Agarwal and devised and directed by Binod Sharma and Hema Bhist) you feel that too many complex ideas are at interplay. What remains interesting at the core of the direction is that the farrago of complexities come together well in the end. One realizes soon interestingly that the script is in chapter formations, i.e. one chapter instead of leading to the next, had an end to itself while in the end all themes merge to highlight the main theme.

At the core this play talks about the restrictions that the society places on women, it ranges from a young girl (Prithi, played by Rajni) getting raped by her boyfriend whose hapless parents show their true plight and loss ; the activist Malti Malini (Meenakshi Naithani) and the misogynistic reactions towards her, the ever presence of the television anchor and correspondent (played by Aditya Deshwal and Sheel Kalia) who only wants to increase their TRP despite the occurrence of wild allegations made by the other panelists the submissive Iyer and the pontiff of all society’s bearing, the algebra

baba (Vyom Gupta).

At the other end of the spectrum, we see a Bhediya (Mohit) or a wolf that is roaming in the village of drunk Maheswar Mahto (Dinesh Agarwal) who is unable to protect his grandchild Nanku (Tanuj), or even his own jobless son Mangarua (Nitesh Raghav) from the clutches of this preying animal. The heart wrenching scene of losing her child, husband and father-in-law is witnessed by Chameli (played by Richa Arora) which is only used again to as piece of news item by Bhatuknath (Sheel Kalia).

We see the play ending in a huge climatic wave of voices of strong female powers that emerge to create a huge medley. The grand opus thus is to destroy all the grave concerns of society against the females. What remains as a point of interest is the way the grave ideas are displayed and enacted, which the director, Binod Sharma cleverly used in a sequential order with small scenes and larger scenes and an opus of females in the end.

Instead of using a single point of reference in the script, Dinesh Agarwal has intertwined many ideas, the rape of Rajni and the devastation of her mother Madhvi (Nishta Sharma) and father Sadashay (Jitender Singh); the everlasting huge presence of the media; the attack of a real wolf on a small child of a rural village depicting the plight of the villagers and in the finality the waving rise of womanhood in itself.

What impressed me was the use of televised narrations and the interaction of multimedia projected screens in the play. A special word must be given to Jitender Singh (Sadashay) and Nitesh Raghav (Mangarua) who pulled the act with great command of their acting skills as they had little dialogues. Little Nanku and Tanuj were a delight to watch, and Hema Bhist, Richa Arora and Nishta Sharma pulled me in their act.

Only one needs to look attentively at the technical of play as

the lighting was choppy and so was the blocking too much centered. The stage could have been used in multiple formations despite the use of a projected screen. The songs could also have been used more appropriately with lights as well as the use of actors. Overall, the play Bhediya is indeed a good watch, and it brings a difference in style of scripting and direction. It marks a new way of looking at theatre and hence one should watch it as a mark of contemporary Indian Drama.

Being Content in a Day / Gouri Nilakantan



When one more year has finished in your life span and your birthday marks that celebratory day we realise many things. We come to see that life is neither too long nor it is too short, its just enough to be content in a day. The meaning of life should be seen within that day, the steps taken on that day should be enough to be carried forward. There is hence value in one, singular step.

When we live day to day we come to realise that we are not slighted in the least and words of today might echo the past

ones. The last breaths of yesterday has given only new meanings today. When you realise how to contain yourself within one day without looking too far ahead you are only and only able to see the rays of the rising sun of tomorrow.

I must say that I have learnt to live day to day without creating too many plans for the future. This has given me the wings that I need to fly higher as I do not fear the future nor feel sorry for the past. I simply give myself just one task to perform per day. I give vale in the singular without the wanting of the plural.

There is value in slow downing to a simple one task. I make sure that I only do one only chore and I define that to my passion, hobby and profession. That one task is always related to theatre, it could be reading a book, watching a play, talking to a student, writing a blog or a paper, or finding a grant. I do not try and push myself beyond that singular task as it makes me content and happy to have finished it in time. This makes me look forward only to the next few days to come.

I know my singular voice of today will turn into a multitude of voices tomorrow. This will help me leap into the golden rainbow to bring back dusts of diamond, gold and silver that will adorn not only me but all. Lets all slow dance. Lets try and be content in one, only to sing and raise our voices to the future sun, to dream that one common dream and share the common glories that are thus sure to come.

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the little fledgling will

leave its nest



We are just birds, we build nests for our eggs to hatch and keep them warm until our fledglings arrive. When its time a gentle push is given to the fledgling to leave the comfort of its coop, only to recreate its own. The birds show no signs of grief when their little ones leave, as they know its only a cycle, then why do humans lament? Is it because as humans we are much more clingy, much more emotionally attached, or simply we just don’t know how to adjust to change.

Change is progress I would say, it is an indicator to not only growth of others but also self growth. However in our cases, unlike birds, we do not need to leave the past completely behind but only allow the past to become a beautiful reminder of tomorrow. Our days to come can hence be planned in such a way that we allow for the easy exit of our young ones and at the same time we also are able to normalise the different situation.

It will be time for me also to bid ” cu soon take care” soon, very soon to my own fledgling. I will see the flight of my young one, only to welcome the change with cheer both for him

and me. While he carves his own journey, I know that new meanings of the situation can be given by me alone. This itself is giving me the eagerness to look forward for the new times to come. There is no fear in my heart and why should there be I wonder? No, I don’t have any ready made answers nor ready plans. All I have is a happy, contented heart to see now the young ones leave and the new emerging times to come to be happy for his occasional returns and my own abode to be.

For me the fact that I can see my young one leave without any fear but with a sense of joy and the fact that I will find myself in a contented space calls for happiness. That happiness will allow me to explore and create new meanings for myself. Its going to be now a state of creating new dreams for me to draw and colour in myriad formations. The staircase to my new starlit world is within my steady and happy gait.

The value of a rest



Life can be best described as a story within many lines, with commas and with full stops. The punctuations of life has its own significance and sometimes a full stop leads to an exclamation mark of joy in the very next moment. I am now in the period of a full stop not really knowing where the next few lines of my own story will lead. I think that each line will be a an great exclamation but that in reality does not

happen. Some can be merely slow days with a semicolon or just three phased dots.

I must admit with all honesty, I wish for something exciting to happen soon. However I am getting used to this slow paratheses that my life is holding me in. I knew I was getting into a journey of long eased three stops which might lead to a lull so I have nothing much to complain. I have nothing to complain as this was done by me with great amount of thinking and fortitude.

What really scares me is that it is in this spaced out paragraph that maybe I will find my inner story is rejecting me. It maybe rejects that stand that I have taken in a full stop just for few more emerging lines to come. My soul is scared, ” what if they never come at all?” Will I then need to lead my life in that rejected phase for ever? The phase of being denied in totality is what no one really wants. That lull if becomes permanent can be totally damaging to both the heart, soul and living.

I then realise that rejection is a part of the process of an actor and also a theatre director, scriptwriter or director. I stop and see that it is so much a part of many paragraphs of his/her life of a theatre person that a few exclamations of joy are enough to carry on further. That is why there is a value in a rest, as allows you to look only ahead. I hope that the next time I allow my inner journey to be written in a few lines I will be able to share lots of punctuations of ecstasy, of delight and of happiness. So stay still my lined life, the value of a rest will turn into a new page soon, very soon.