

Do you know Janusz Korczak?

Ravindra Tripathi's

theaterama



A Scene from 'Sunil Shanbaug's Play 'Dreams of Talim'

Sometime you hear a true story which is more dramatic than drama, more painful than Greek tragedies. Here is a story for you which Sunil Shanbaug, the director who presented 'Dreams of Talim' in 13th BRM (Bharat Rang Mahotsav), told before a gathering in NSD on 14th of January. We met in 'meet the director' program in BRM. I was officially asked to conduct the program by Dinesh Khanna, the coordinator. The idea of the meet is a very good concept and well organized by Dinesh and his team members' i.e. Suman Kumar Singh, Savita Rani, Vipin Bhardwaj and others. During the course of question-answer session, Sunil narrated a story which stunned the audience.

Replying to a question, Sunil said that this time (in 13th BRM) initially he wanted to bring another production based on Ravindra Nath Tagore's *Dak Ghar* (the post office) in 13th BRM.

But, regarding staging of *Dak Ghar*, there is another story attached to the play, the story of Janusz Korczak. Korczak was a Polish writer of children literature during the Second World War. He was also a principal of a school for orphans. It was the time when Hitler's German forces were encircling Poland. Himself a Jew, Korczak was at the receiving end of the Nazi German power, but he was continuing his work. He felt that something unexpected might happen any day and children of his orphanage should be prepared for this. At that horrible time of history, Korczak decided to do a play with orphan students and the name of the play was *Dak Ghar*. The play was staged. After sometime, the Nazis sent all the children to a concentration camp and they were massacred there. Korczak accompanied the children in graveyards.

In Sunil's production of *Dak Ghar* this story is interwoven and it is already staged in Calcutta. The staging of Tagore's play in those circumstances and story of Korczak's integrity and commitment tells a lot about strength of literature. Korczak was himself a *littérateur* and wrote for children. But he chose Tagore's play. Those who have either read or seen *Dak Ghar* know that it is a story of hope and faith of a young and innocent boy. Perhaps Korczak thought that this play will be a moral source of strength at that time of darkness. Or maybe something else was in his mind. Who knows? But one thing is certain that literature, drama or art has a moral relevance.

I am eager to see this production of Sunil.

Dreams of Talim – A Tribute

to Chetan Datar

Ravindra Tripathi's

theaterama



Last year in BRM (the 12th Bharat Rang Mahotsav) when I saw *Sex, Morality and Censorship*, directed by **Sunil Shanbaug**, I was quite impressed. And not only me, the entire Kamani auditorium was electrified when the performance was over.

This year Sunil Shanbaug has brought another production ***Dreams Of Talim***, written by Sachin Kundalkar. But there is also a story behind it, which is essential to be told if you want to fully understand this. Actually, before the play starts, the story is told before the audience. It is about late Chetan Datar, a talented theatre person who died young in 2008. Chetan had written a monologue titled 'No I Madhavbagh' around 2004. It was never staged during his lifetime.

After Chetan's death Sunil decided to do one of Chetan's text on stage as a tribute. Then came **Sachin Kundalkar** for his support. Sachin wrote a full length play based on Chetan's monologue. The result is ***Dreams of Talim***.

It is a play about alternative sexuality, an emerging discourse in Indian society. The problem of alternative sexuality is that it is taboo. Despite that it has won a legal battle, the society at large doesn't accept it, the family abhors it. The play deals with this 'taboo', the issues, questions and passions associated with it.

It has four characters, Anay, Yash, Sita and Sita's mother. Anay is a young theatre director. He is abandoned by all his colleagues and friends except one, Yash who still admires him. Both the boys are in special relationship (gay) with each other. Meanwhile, Sita, an actress come in their life. She showed her willingness to act in play which Anay wants to direct a play. When the rehearsal get started the problems of alternative sexuality arise on different planes. Anay is individually facing the problem and Sita is finding it difficult to come to terms with it on emotional level. Simultaneously many issues about love, theatre and relationships emerge.

The strength of ***Dreams of Talim*** is its acting. All the actors, Anand Tewari as Yash, Suvrat Joshi as Anay, Geetanjali Kulkarni as Aai and Divya Jaddale as Sita, give commendable performances. There is an element of fantasy also in the play which makes it a little bit surrealistic. The play was multi-lingual with a mix of Hindi and English.