

An Enriching Discussion on Indian Folk Theatre Tradition at Sanskar Bharti's Monthly Symposium



The monthly seminar organized at Sanskar Bharti's central office 'Kala Sankul' in New Delhi proved to be a memorable occasion for art and culture lovers. In this year's event, renowned theatre artist and Sangeet Natak Academy Award winner Shri Lokendra Trivedi presented his views on the topic "Our rich theatre-music tradition woven in folk theatre and its use in the present times".

The programme began with lighting of lamps and the motto song of Sanskar Bharti. On this occasion, along with the team of Sanskar Bharti, many senior litterateurs, theatre artists and artists of the city were present. Prominent guests included former Secretary of Hindi Academy, Delhi, Hari Suman Bisht, senior theatre artist J.P. Singh, Nisha Trivedi, renowned Chhau Guru Sapan Acharya, Suresh Shetty, Vashisht Upadhyay,

Bhupesh Joshi and many other eminent names.

Lokendra Trivedi's lecture organized in the monthly seminar of Sanskar Bharati was an excellent effort to highlight the depth of Indian folk theatre tradition and its rich cultural heritage. Trivedi discussed his topic "Our rich theatre-music tradition woven in folk theatre and its use in present times" in a very simple, effective and factual manner.

His lecture style not only brought forth the features of folk theatre like Nautanki, Yakshagana, Bhavai, Tamasha, but also explained the relevance of these genres in the perspective of the new age. He stressed the need to preserve these ancient genres in the technological age and explained how connecting the new generation to them is the need of the hour.

The most notable part of the programme was that he raised the issue of making the collection of folk theatre available to the general public at the government and non-government level. This suggestion can be an important step towards preserving the Indian cultural heritage and taking it to new heights.

The Q&A session in the seminar made the dialogue between the audience and the lecturer more effective. The management, conduct and participation of the program show that Sanskar Bharti is not only a pioneer in the promotion of Indian art and culture, but is also active in connecting it with the new generation.

The seminar was conducted very effectively by Garima Rani. The contribution of "Kala Sankul" arrangements in-charge Mr. Digvijay Pandey, coordinator of the dance music seminar Shruti Sinha, co-convenor Vishwadeep, guide senior theatre artist Shyam Kumar and Raj Upadhyay was especially commendable in the success of the program. Apart from this, Harshit, Brajesh, Vijendra, Satyam and Shivam also played an important role in making the event successful.

In the end, the theatre seminar coordinator Mr. Kuldeep Sharma

presented the vote of thanks. This event proved to be inspirational and informative for Indian folk art and theatre lovers. Such initiatives will definitely help in preserving and enriching our cultural heritage.

The End and the Future of Theater

The first obituary of the theater was written in the 1920s when the talkies ushered in a new era of entertainment. But not only did the theater survive the competition from cinema, the Broadway Book Musicals became a billion-dollar industry around the time. The first real blow to small regional and off-off-Broadway theater came from the television in the 1960s when a television set became a household item. But that did not stop Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller from writing great plays. They forced the audience to return to the theaters. Harold Pinter, Beckett, Albee, and more recently Mamet created scintillating works for the stage despite the competition from the cinema and the television industry. The competition challenged theater to become more daring and intelligent.

Folk Theatre of India:

Nautanki

Nautanki is one of South Asia's most famous folk theatre performances, especially in northern India. Nautanki was the most significant source of entertainment in most of the cities and villages in north India. Nautanki's rich musical compositions and humorous storylines hold a strong influence over rural people's imagination. Nautanki, also known as svang, originated in the late 19th century in Uttar Pradesh and steadily gained popularity. Nautanki's origins lie in the Saangit, Bhagat, and Swang musical theatre traditions of Northern India. One Saangit called Saangit Rani Nautanki Ka became so popular that the whole genre's name became Nautanki.

Folk Theatre of India: Yakshagana

Yakshagana is a traditional folk art developed in the western parts of Chikmagalur districts in Karnataka and Kasaragod district in Kerala. Yakshagana comprises music, dance, theatre, costumes, and makeup with a blend of unique style and forms. It is said to have evolved from pre-classical music forms and theatrical arts during the Bhakti movement. Yakshgana is referred to as 'Thenku thittu' towards the south from Dakshina Kannada to Kasaragod in Tamil Nadu, whereas it is referred to as 'Badaga Thittu' north of Udupi.

Folk Theatre Forms of India: Tamasha

Tamasha is considered a major traditional dance form of the Marathi theatre, which includes celebration filled with dancing and singing and is performed mainly by nomadic theatre groups throughout the Maharashtra region. Marathi theatre marked its journey at the beginning of 1843. In the following years, Tamasha primarily consisted of singing and dancing, expanded its range.

**Siddheshwar Sen's RAJA
HARISHCHANDRA (MAACH)**
Director: Babulal Deora



Playwright: Siddheshwar Sen

Director: Babulal Deora

Group: Individual, Ujjain

Language: Malwi

Duration: 1 hr 30 mins

The Form

Maach is a folk theatre form of the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. This form was initiated around 200-250 years ago by Guru Gopal Ji of Bhagsipura of Ujjain. Even today three major akhadas of this theatre form viz. Daulatganj Akhada of Ustad Kaluram Sharma, Jaisinghpura Akhada of Balmukund Ji, and Mali Pura Akhada of Ustad Radhakishan Ji are prevelant. Maach has more than 150 scripts/ manuscripts and 125 melodies sung on 5/7 different rhythms. The main musical instruments of Maach are Harmonium, Dhol and Sarangi. Maach is a musical theatre that begins 10 at night and runs till 8 in the morning. Traditionally Maach is performed by men only, but Ustad Kalu Ram Ji's Gharana has always had female artists as well.

The Play

Raja Harishchandra denounced his kingdom and mortgaged his own, his wife's and his sons's life to repay his guru's debt, and to preserve the Truth. Written by Siddheshwar Sen and directed by Maach guru Babulal Deora, this presentation Raja Harishchandra has been staged by the group in many festivals held in different cities like Jamshedpur Tatanagar, Jharkhand; All India Craft Festival, Shilpramam, Hyderabad (Telengana) and at Ankur Rangmanch & Pratibha Lok Kala.

The Director

Born on 11 October 1963 in village Nayakhe of Ujjain District, Babu Lal Deora, at the age of 15, participated in the stories

of Lokarg and Tejaji Maharaj and decided to step into the field of Maach. He was inspired and trained in Maach of Malwa by Guru Shri Siddheshwar Ji Sen and elder brother Ratan Maharaj Lokesh Sen. His first performance was as a singer in the chorus. After the death of his guru he continued the tradition. Later he went to Chittor for a workshop with Hafiz Khan, where he was introduced to some more melodies of Maach associated with Turra Kalangi folk theatre. Since then he has constantly been staging and promoting this folk art.

Cast & Credits

Raja Harishchandra: Babulal Deora

Guri Vishwamitra: Sudhir Sankhla

Kalua: Mangilal Bhati

Pradhan Ji: Babu Bhati

Rani Tara: Visnu Chandel

Pharaasan: Sonu, Tikaram Bhaati, Teju Solanki

Harmonium: Mangilal Vaishnav

Dholak: Pappu Chauhan

Tek: Lakhan Deora, Madanlal Deora, Vinod Paanchal

Chela: Ravi Akodia, Kuldip Panwar

Playwright: Siddheshwar Sen

Director: Babulal Deora