# Sherni: The latest Vidya Balan starrer on Amazon Prime / Sanjiva Sahai

This is Aastha Tiku’s very first attempt at story and screenplay. Quite impressive. Dialogues by Yashaswi and Amit appear improvised, sound natural and sharp. Lovely. Benedict and Naren have come up with some extremely restrained musical scores that elevate the sense of mystery in the jungle. And yes, Rakesh Haridas with his available-light shots provide some real-life experience for the viewers.

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# Henrik Ibsen’s Play: Peecha Karti Parchhaiyan



Playwright: Henrik Ibsen
Adapter: Ila Arun
Director: K. K. Raina
Group: Surnai Theatre and Folk Arts Foundation, Mumbai

Language: Hindi
Duration: 2 hrs 20 mins

## The Play

This is an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s controversial play Ghosts which was first staged in 1881 causing quite a stir. This is the story of the family of late Maharaja Kunwar Viraj Bhanu Pratap Singh, whose death is shrouded in mystery, talked of in whispers, and hidden in the inscrutable eyes of his widow, Yashodhara Baisaheb. As the story unfolds, we see the causes of the break-down of families, symbolised in the destruction of the havelis they inhabit. But yet the ghosts of the past cannot be destroyed. The play deals with the issue of domestic violence and suppression of women, whose voices are silenced by tradition and society. The voices of Ibsen’s women, just as the voices of women all over the world, need to be heard.

## Director’s Note

Ghost is a family drama that deals with the conflict between generations due to changing human conditions, beliefs and customs which are handed down from one generation to another, thus degenerating the social system that was created to protect and nurture. These beliefs and customs turn into ghosts and keep haunting us in one way or the other. This relationship between past and future can make our present unbearable if not understood and analysed well. Ibsen had said “we sail with a corpse in cargo”. Therefore these ghosts need to be re-examined in the light of each individual’s experience, and socio-political and religious system he is confronted with. If not, the most gifted of society’s future generation will face destruction.

## The Director

With over 30 years of experience actor, director and writer, K. K. Raina is a graduate of the National School of Drama, New Delhi. He joined Surnai theatre group as an actor but soon was entrusted with additional responsibility of direction. He has

been directing and acting in all its plays since 1983 and is amongst the earliest members of the core group.
He has acted in over three hundred theatrical performances and directed over two hundred fifty shows. He has directed two short T.V. films and has been writing, directing and producing T.V. serials for Kashir Channel independently. He has acted in prime roles in over 30 Bollywood films and continues to do so. In the past he had acted in many T.V. serials.

The Playwright
Henrik Johan Ibsen (20 March 1828 – 23 May 1906) was a Norwegian playwright and theatre director. As one of the founders of modernism in theatre, Ibsen is often referred to as 'the father of realism', and one of the most influential playwrights of his time. His major works include Brand, Peer Gynt, An Enemy of the People, Emperor and Galilean, A Doll's House, Hedda Gabler, Ghosts, The Wild Duck, When We Dead Awaken, Rosmersholm, and The Master Builder. He is the most frequently performed dramatist in the world after Shakespeare, and by the early 20th century A Doll's House became world's most performed play.

The Group
In 1982, Surnai began its journey with the twin objectives of promoting the folk arts of India and staging contemporary plays which are thought-provoking and focus on relevant social issues. In 2016, the group re-established itself under the aegis of its newly-established Surnai Theatre and Folk Arts Foundation. This foundation is committed to the uplift of women, starting with the survival of the girl-child, her literacy, health and the seemingly insurmountable problem of child-marriage and widowhood. The Surnai Foundation, with its focus on folk theatre, puppetry, and traditional story-telling forms like the phad hopes to reach out not only to urban audiences but also to rural platforms to carry these themes to villages in far-flung areas.

Cast & Credits

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| Yashodhra Baisa | Ila Arun |
| Purohitji | K. K. Raina |
| Yuvraj Bana | Rahul Bagga |
| Thomas / Gaurav Amlani | Rajeev Pandey |
| Reena | Mia Maelzer |
| Music Arrangement | Ila Arun. |
| Sets & Lights | Salim Akhtar |
| Music Operation | Sanjoy Daz |
| Adapted by | Ila Arun |
| Director | K K Raina |

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# Shabd Leela – The Interplay of Words / Manohar Khushalani



Mystical Piety

PERFORMANCE

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!