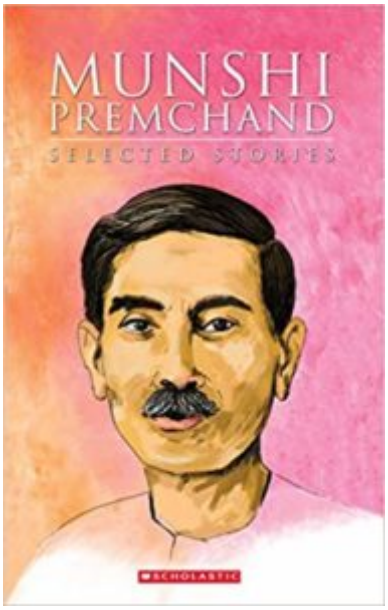
Rajendranath’s Play on Stories of Premchand | Manohar Khushalani



A Review by Prof. Manohar Khushalani

IICs Annual Day was celebrated with a fitting tribute to Munshi Premchand by dramatic renditions of four of his most well known short stories directed by Rajinder Nath and presented by Nepathya Foundation. All the four plays were really heartwarming epitomized by the Director’s deft presentation, which was minimalistic and intellectually stimulating, thus doing justice to the author’s own style of writing. Competent performances by all the actors, especially Mala Kumar, Rekha Johri, Animesh Singhal and Gaurav Sehgal propelled the play.

Known as a pragmatist, social reality and pathos has been the focus of Premchan’s writings, which was also emulated by two of the plays performed that day; Shanti and Satgati. But, pathos isn’t the only emotion he could write about. In ‘Moteram Ji Shastri’, the story of a lovable charlatan, who, like Molier’s Mock Doctor, gives us twinkle-eyed humour of

unbelievable situations. But, despite his wife’s warnings, of not getting entangled with women, Moteram ends up becoming the Queen’s physician, enchanting her with his gift of poetic gab, only to be kicked unceremoniously out by the guards.

Bade Bhai Sahab, a light-hearted story of sibling rivalry between two brothers, one of whom is five years elder to the other. While the elder brother is prone to sermonize the younger one; on the need to take studies seriously, much to his own embarrassment, the younger one catches up with him as he gets promoted each year. Unfortunately, the older one stays put in the same class. Charmingly enacted, the mirthful story ends with food for thought. Is educational qualification really superior to wisdom laden experience?

Published earlier in IIC Diary

Dramatised Stories of Premchand

IIC ANNUAL DAY

Stories of Premchand.
Directed by Rajinder Nath
Presented by Nepathya Foundation
22 January 2019

The IIC Annual Day was celebrated with a tribute to Munshi Premchand. It featured dramatic renditions of four of his best-known short stories, directed by Rajinder Nath and presented by Nepathya Foundation. All the four plays were heartwarming, epitomised by the director's deft presentation, which was minimalistic and intellectually stimulating, thus doing justice to the author's own style of writing. Competent performances by all the actors, especially Mala Kumar, Rekha Johri, Animesh Singhal and Gaurav Sehgal, propelled the play.

Known as a pragmatist, social reality and pathos have been the focus of Premchand's writings, and two of the plays performed that day, *Shanti* and *Satgati*, reflected this. But pathos isn't the only emotion he could write about. *Moteram Ji Shastri* is the humourous story of a lovable charlatan, who like Moliere's Mock Doctor, gives us twinkle-eyed humour of unbelieveble situations. Despite his wife's warnings of not getting entangled with women, Moteram ends up becoming the Queen's physician, enchanting her with his gift of poetic prattle, only to be unceremoniously kicked out by the guards.

Bade Bhai Sahab is a light-hearted story of sibling rivalry between two brothers. While the elder brother is prone to sermonising the younger one to take his studies seriously, much to his embarrassment, the younger one catches up with him as he gets promoted each year. Unfortunately, the older one remains in the same class. Charmingly enacted, the mirthful story ends with food for thought. Is educational qualification really superior to wisdom-laden experience?

■ **MANOHAR KHUSHALANI**

Performance of Moteram J Shastri

Scanned with CamScanner

Review as published in IIC Diary

Shri 420 by Molière

The Play
Shri 420 is an Indian adaptation of Molière's masterful 17th century French comedy Tartuffe. It was adapted into Hindi by Atul Tiwari and performed for Australian audiences in 2017. The plot revolves around a wealthy expat Indian, Om Prakash Bhatti who is a devout follower of a Charlatan Swami Tarkeshwarnath Anandpunjanandji. It is a hilarious play that explores how, in seeking a shortcut to spirituality, people fall prey to phony '420' Babas and face its consequences.

Director's Note
Be it Bhas, Kalidas, or Shakespeare, the great classics of literature remain alive since they explore social
dynamics that remain relevant throughout the ages, and across cultural boundaries. These stories engage with audiences because they are meaningful and touch a chord with the universal human experience. This phenomenon can be seen in Molière's oeuvre, notably in his masterpiece Tartuffe. The hallmark of Molière's works is his examination of serious social subjects through a comedic, playful lens. The spirit of Molière is thus transposed in our Indian adaptation, Shri 420. We hope you enjoy the play as much as we have enjoyed the process. We have had the pleasure of working with a delightful team of both experienced and young actors, and backstage crew from both India and Australia.

The Directors
Saba Zaidi is a graduate of AMU, Aligarh; NSD, Delhi; and UTS, Sydney. She began her career as a TV drama director and producer at Doordarshan. Having established her career in TV, she moved on to be a designer, director and actor in films and theatre in India and Australia. She has won a national award

for costume design in Trikaal and Doordarshan Awards for her plays Wapsi and Zewar ka Dibba. Presently she is the founding Artistic Director of Adakar. Atul Tiwari is a graduate from NSD, Delhi. He has directed plays for professional repertories, theatre
companies, and drama schools in India and abroad. Apart from the production of classical and modern Indian plays, Atul has a repertoire of over 30 productions in different languages consisting of famous Western playwrights. He has written screen-plays and dialogues for feature films and has also acted in films like Three Idiots, PK and The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Atul is an executive member of Sangeeta Natak Academy and has recently been awarded Yash Bharti Samman by U.P. Government.

The Playwright

Moliere, a French playwright and actor, is considered one of the greatest master of comedy in Western literature and theatre. He brought elements of Commedia dell'arte to refine French comedy and amongs this best-known works are The Misanthrope, The School for Wives, Tartuffe, The Miser, The imaginary invalid and The Bourgeois Gentlemen.

The Group

Adakar was formed in 2014. It is committed to bring Australian sub-communities together through theatre and cultural exchanges. It staged Kanjoos (Molière's The Miser) as part of the Parramasala Festival in 2014, and Wedding Album and Shri 420 at NIDA's Parade Theatres.

Cast & Credits

Swami Tarkeshwarnath Anandpunjanand : Vipul Vyas

Ammaji Panna Bhatti : Saba Zaidi Abdi
Om Prakash Bhatti : Nisar Sirguroh
Sweety, Ira Bhatti : Aparna Vats
Mahi Bhatti : Jyotsna Sharma
Dev Prakash : Abhishek Mehrotra

Deepal : Avantika Tomar
Krishna Kant : Smarajit Dey
Phulki : Aditi Dey
Vivek : Jagat Sharma
Police Officer : Farjad Mahmood
Set Design : Jayant Deshmukh & Rajeev Maini
Light Design : Tushar Bose & Dhruv Jyoti Ghose
Costume Design : Mala Mehta & Richa Sharad
Music : Amod Bhatt
Sound : Sunil Kumar
Make-up : Sandhya Bose
Graphic Design : Shahid Malik & Katrina Lee
Photography : Freddy Handa &Prugya Maini
Choreography : Consultant Pooja Pant
Magic Consultant : Mangesh Desai
Production Manager & Ticketing : Smarajit Dey (Bapi)
Stage Manager : Aparna Tijoriwala
Properties : Saral Somaiya & Aditi Dey
Media & Communications : Tamanna Abdi
Playwright : Molière
Adaptation : Atul Tiwari
Direction : Saba Zaidi Abdi & Atul Tiwari