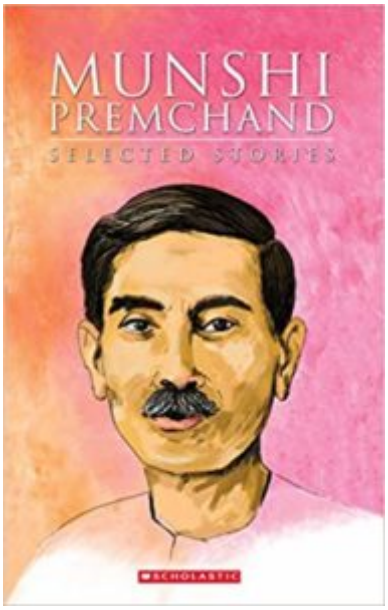
Rajendranath’s Play on Stories of Premchand | Manohar Khushalani



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

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Review as published in IIC Diary

Kafan – Kafan Chor by Munshi Premchand & Amin Kamil



The Play & Director's Note
In today's world, while we claim that the nations have come closer to each other, this global convergence has also unleashed a strange trail of war, violence and up-rootedness, where the victor and the vanquished are caught in the same ritual of death. This death, physical or metaphorical, is cutting across national borders, faiths and cultures. Seeds of hatred are fodder for brutality, poverty, misery and hopelessness. Kafan – Kafan Chor has two great short stories, one of Munshi Premchand and the other of Amin Kamil (A renowned Kashmiri author). The performance takes an absurd tragic journey, through the contemporary helpless human condition, looking at the past and present, known and unknown forces, which create this landscape of death and destruction. The performance has also
taken poems from different lands, different poets, and poems by soldiers in the battlefield. Despite great scientific advancement, has mankind lost the basic value of being humane?

The Director
M. K. Raina is a well-known theatre luminary, who has been

working in the field of theatre for the last three and a half decades, innovating, studying, analyzing, writing and teaching. He has worked extensively in both contemporary and traditional theatre in South Asia and has been instrumental in reviving the traditional folk theatre of Kashmir, Bhand Pather. He has been a visiting faculty of several national and international Institutions, such as National School of Drama, Central University of Hyderabad, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, University of Hawaii USA etc. He has been a fellow at the Stanford University, USA and a scholar-in-residence at the Jamia Millia Central
University, New Delhi. He is a well-known social and cultural activist and is a founder member of SAHMAT, a trust formed to promote communal harmony and social equality. He is also a trustee of the South Asia Foundation, India, and the Artistic Director of the theatre group, Prayog. He has also made documentaries and films for various national institutions and for national channels. For his long term contribution to theatre, he has received several awards including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Sahitya Kala Parishad Samman, Sanskriti Award and B. V. Karanth lifetime achievement award.

The Group

Three Arts Club is one of Delhi’s oldest theatre groups, founded in 1943. TAC enthralled and entertained its audiences for four decades (1943-1983). Former presidents Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Zakir Hussain, and former Prime Ministers Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Shri Charan Singh, as well as theatre and film luminaries like Prithviraj Kapoor, Shobhana Samarth and Sunder graced its performances. The club also has the distinction of being one of the first groups to give a platform to women on the Delhi stage. Since it revival in 2008, Three Arts Club organizes annual theatre festivals and has to its credit production of 19 plays in various genres ranging from comedy to drama. TAC has made rapid strides in both the technical and artistic aspects of theatre, especially after its association with M.K. Raina. In June 2017 TAC

organized a week- long workshop under his able guidance. Three Arts Club also extends its activities to educational institutes with the aim of promoting histrionic skills among the new generation and has organized many inter-school theatre competitions. True to its original mission (TAC performed children's theatre in the 1950s), the group provides a platform to school children in Delhi NCR to explore their creative side and stage their own productions.

Cast & Credits
On Stage : Avanish Pandey, Durgesh Kumar, Kriti V. Sharma, Mukul Singh, Nupur Jain, Pankaj Sharawat,
Sachin Srivastava, Shalini Singh, Vipan Kumar

Lights : Govind Yadav
Sound & Music : Rakesh Kumar Singh
Costumes : Kriti V. Sharma
Stage Manager : Shalini Singh
Back Stage : Avinash Singh, Nidhikant Pandey, Sanjeev Singh
Producer : Anuradha Dar
Hindi Translation of KafanChor : Asif Ali

Storywriters : Munshi Premchand & Amin Kamil
Director : M K Raina