

'Katharang': A Stirring Theatrical Tribute to the Inner Worlds of Women



On April 28, 2025, the **Sammukh Auditorium** of the **National School of Drama**, New Delhi, transformed into a space of introspection and intensity as part of the *Katharang* series presented by *Mailorang* (Maithili Lok Rang). The evening featured two poignant theatrical presentations—**“Ek Stree Ke Kaarname”** by Suryabala and **“Betiyaan Mannu Ki”**, based on selected short stories of Mannu Bhandari. Both productions were helmed by acclaimed theatre director **Prof. Devendra Raj Ankur**, known for his ability to breathe theatrical life into literary works with sharp insight and emotional precision.

“Ek Stree Ke Kaarname” – A Satirical Soliloquy of the Self

The first play, *“Ek Stree Ke Kaarname”*, dived deep into the

psyche of a seemingly balanced and educated woman whose exterior composure masks an inner churning of suppressed emotions, quiet frustrations, and the desperate quest for identity. Suryabala's acerbic wit and psychological depth were beautifully translated on stage through a tight script and layered performances.

Durga Sharma, portraying the central character, delivered a finely tuned performance—her expressive control and emotional nuance navigating the character's journey from repression to quiet self-awareness. **Amitabh Srivastava** lent strength to the performance with his presence, bringing balance and rhythm to the narrative's unfolding. The interplay of speech, silence, and irony kept the audience deeply engaged, holding a mirror to the everyday contradictions of womanhood.

"Betiyaan Mannu Ki" – Fragments of Feminine Reality

The second presentation, *"Betiyaan Mannu Ki"*, was an ensemble performance based on several short stories by **Mannu Bhandari**, one of Hindi literature's most powerful voices on gender and identity. The play explored multiple dimensions of womanhood across varied roles and stages of life, offering moments of tenderness, conflict, vulnerability, and resistance.

The cast—**Amit Saxena**, **Gauri Deval**, **Aditi**, and **Rachita Verma**—brought these diverse female experiences to life with empathy and skill. Each transition between characters and narratives was handled with clarity and emotional depth. Whether as daughters, lovers, mothers, or rebels, the female characters emerged with raw honesty, making the stories resonate deeply with the audience.

The production's lighting, designed by **Raghav Prakash Mishra**, subtly enhanced each scene's emotional tone without overpowering the narrative. His use of soft transitions, warm shadows, and isolated highlights helped build the psychological landscapes of both plays. The minimalist set and gentle pacing allowed the performances and text to breathe, focusing the audience's attention squarely on the characters

and their journeys. The **music selection**, curated by **Rajesh Singh**, provided an evocative auditory backdrop, enhancing each emotional transition. **Sahaj Harjai** and **Unis Yadav** skillfully operated the music during the performances, ensuring smooth and expressive sonic flow that deepened audience immersion.

Katharang's theatrical evening was a thoughtful confluence of literature and performance—a celebration of women's stories told with dignity, irony, and emotional truth. Prof. **Devendra Raj Ankur** once again demonstrated his profound sensitivity as a director, translating literary narratives into stage experiences that speak directly to the conscience. The evening left the audience moved, provoked, and awakened reminding us that theatre, at its best, does more than entertain; it opens conversations and illuminates' silences.