Sheshpal Singh’s Munshiganj Golikand urf MookBalidaan

Playwright: Sheshpal Singh ‘Shesh’
Director: Atamjeet Singh
Group: Individual, Lucknow
Language: Awadhi
Duration: 1 hr 40 mins

The Play
In 1886, the British made the Avadh Rent Act and implemented it. In the Act, the Kings and Talukedaars got the right to collect Rent. Since their tax collection was arbitrary, the poor farmers opposed this recovery and under the leadership of Baba Ramchander, this movement spread in the districts of Rae Bareli, Barabanki, Sultanpur, Pratapgarh and Faizabad. Baba Janaki Das took over from Baba Ramchander, and was later captured along with his companions and put in the Rae Bareli Jail. Till then the Kisan Sabha had been formed. In 1920 farmers gathered in Munshiganj, across the Sai River, to free their leaders from jail. The farmers were fired on and hundreds of them were killed. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came to Rae Bareli to meet the farmers, and the District Magistrate took him into custody. The commissioner, Colonel Founteray, realizing the gravity of the incident of the Munshiganj firing, ordered the injured to be shot as well so that they do not become witnesses of the massacre. Some of the dead bodies were loaded into Ikka-Taangas and drowned overnight in the Dalmau Ganges River. For the remaining corpses, four big pits were dug in Munshiganj, and a hundred corpses each were buried in them. Munshiganj is also called the second Jallianwala incident.

Director’s Note

I had read about the Munshiganj shoot-out about 30 – 35 years ago, and the writer of our Nautanki, Sheshpaal ji, had also told me about it. Since then the design of staging it has been in my mind. Since this incident was from Awadh region, the idea was that it should be performed in Awadhi language. Since I have experimented in Nautanki area, I decided to get it written in Awadhi language. I asked Sheshpaal ji to take up the responsibility of writing which he gladly accepted. In this Nautanki, about 30 young artists have rehearsed with complete dedication. It was a difficult task for city artists to memorize dialogues in Awadhi but they did well. I think this is the first full-length Nautanki written in Awadhi language.

The Director

A theatre group Meghdoot was formed in 1974 in Lucknow by theatre lovers and young people. Atamjeet associated himself with this group right from its inception. It was under the aegis of Meghdoot that he acted in a number of plays. In 1977, Atamjeet Singh acted in Aala Afsar. The play was in nautanki form, written Mudrarakshash and directed by Bansi Kaul.

Later Atamjeet Singh started directing nautankis independently. He has directed around 20 Nautankis; some of these are Laila Majnu, Bhaand Charitram and Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Nautanki Baje Dhindhora urf Khoon ka Rang was performed in Bharat Rang Mohatsava. Apart from acting in a few movies and T.V. Serials, Atamjeet Singh has toured countries like Finland, Norway and Pakistan on theatre projects. He has been honoured by different institutions in India, and has been awarded an Honorary Diploma by International Amateur Theatre Association. In 2003 U.P. Sangeet Natak Academy also honoured him for his contribution in the field of theatre.

The Playwright

Sheshpal Singh ‘Shesh’ was born on 20th December 1958 in village Kasna, Dist. Raebareli

He has written and directed a number of plays and nautankis

for various government and semi government offices of Uttar Pradesh. He has written full-length proscenium nautankis Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Bhand Charitram and staged them in Lucknow under the direction of Sri Atamjeet Singh.

Cast & Credits
Sootradhar/Ahelkaar/Grameen Sandeep Kumar, Saurabh Kumar Mishr
Munshi Kalika Prasad/Grameen Aditya Vishwakarma
Sootradhar/Ziledaar/Pagal Sujeet Singh Yadav
Mangloo/Durga/Grameen Shivakant Awasthi
Sheetlu/Binda/Grameen Manoj Singh
Grameen/Isri Kaka Adarsh Singh
Raja Veerpal Singh Gagandeep Singh
Raja Tiloi/Ram Narayan Ramesh Chandra Saini
Raja Rampal/Mayor/Grameen Ashutosh Jaiswal
Raja Arkha/Sherif Vinay Kumar Mishra
Raja Tribhuvan Devasheesh Misra
Sootradhar/Ziledaar/Grameen Subham Singh Chauhan
Gayika/Baandi Shreya Awasthi
Gayika/Grameen Pallavi Singh, Shubhra Pandey
Baba Ramchander/Kedar Pandit/Grameen Vikesh Bajpai
Siphai/Grameen Sarabjeet Singh
Siphai/Grameen/Daak Babu Abhishek Yadav
Amol Sharma Harsh Jaggi
Acchi Jaan/Gayika Supriya Chaterjee
Chaprasi/Grameen Ravindra Nath Yadav
Nasrullah Khan/Grameen Shubham Tiwari
Shivbalak/Badri Narayan/Grameen Shivam Singh
Gangadeen/Grameen Avinash Kumar Singh
Ram Awtar/Grameen Gaurav Dhingra
Baba Jankidaas/Grameen/Commissioner Abhishek Singh
Nehru Ji/Grameen Akshat Sunil

Stage Design Gagandeep Singh/ Manoj Singh
Stage Décor Abhishek Singh/ Ramesh Chanra Saini
Stage Property Aditya/Shubham/Shivakant
Rehearsal In-charge Devasheesh/Rozy Dubey/ Abhishek/Sujeet

Costume Karamjeet Kaur
Music Harsh Jaggi
Make-up Shaheer Ahmad
Harmonium Zubair
Nakkara Md. Siddiqui
Dholak Md. Imran
Light Assistant Nitish Bharadwaj
Light Design Devasheesh Misra
Dance Choreography Rozy Dubey
Presentation Controller Assistant Sujeet Singh Yadav
Presentation Controller Sarabjit Singh

Playwright Sheshpal Singh
Concept, Sound Design & Direction Atamjeet Singh

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