Shyam Swami: A Journey from Stage to Screen

The theatrical journey of **Shyam Swami**, which began in the historic lanes of Bikaner, Rajasthan, has evolved over the years into a significant cultural odyssey, seamlessly bridging the worlds of stage and screen. His earliest tryst with performance took place during his school years, where weekly assemblies became a platform for reciting poems, narrating stories, and enacting skits. His selection for a drama in the annual function further nurtured this emerging passion for theatre.

A pivotal moment arrived before his college years when he was selected for the Theatre Summer Workshop organized by the *Jodhpur Sangeet Natak Akademi*. This workshop provided him with an intensive introduction to various theatrical forms and techniques. It was here that he played the lead role in Charpai, written by Suresh Awasthi and directed by S.D. Chauhan – a performance that marked his first significant step as a theatre practitioner.

Following this, Swami became associated with the Marudhara Theatre Society. Under the direction of Ashok Joshi, he performed the lead role in *Tidorav*, a Rajasthani play authored by Harish Bhadani, which was successfully staged across the state in nine performances. During this period, he also participated in a *National School of Drama (NSD) workshop* conducted by Vagish Kumar Singh. The workshop resulted in the creation of *Ek Ped Ki Kahani*, an environment-themed play that was performed over 37 times throughout Rajasthan and received widespread acclaim from audiences.

Upon completing his graduation, Swami moved to Delhi for professional reasons. Although he stepped away from active theatre for a period, his engagement with the art continued through regular attendance at performances. A fortuitous meeting with director Ashok Talwar at Shri Ram Centre opened new avenues, leading to his selection for a role in the television serial *Vaidik Kaleen Nariyaan*. This opportunity brought him closer to the worlds of acting and production,

marking the beginning of a new phase in his artistic journey.

Swami then fully embraced production work, collaborating with some of the most eminent figures in Indian theatre and cinema, including *Tigmanshu Dhulia, Gulzar Sahab, Sagar Sarhadi, and Meghna Gulzar*. His passion for theatre remained constant, reflected in his significant contribution to the production of *Amal Allana's* teleplay *Devyani Ka Kehna*, a noteworthy milestone in his career.

During the Commonwealth Games, he undertook the production responsibilities for NSD professor Hema Singh's acclaimed solo play *Zindagi Madhur Hai*, Kuman Senu Mein, which was successfully performed more than thirteen times across India, including at the Bharat Rang Mahotsav. His dual role as actor and production member in the Parsi play *Khoobsurat Bala*, directed by *Vagish Kumar Singh* and *Hema Singh* for the Theatre Olympics, stands as a highlight of his theatrical career.

Years of active involvement in both theatre and screen ultimately inspired him to establish the *Skin and Stage Foundation (Trust)*. Today, Shyam Swami brings together his acting expertise and production experience to lead this institution as a vibrant cultural initiative. His journey exemplifies how dedication, passion, and creativity can converge to shape a meaningful artistic legacy, contributing to both traditional theatre and contemporary media.

Natsamrat's Theatrical Showcase: A Vibrant Tapestry

of Emotion, Satire, and Humour

On May 24, 31, and June 1, Delhi's L.T.G. Auditorium at Mandi House came alive with a rich blend of theatre as Natsamrat, a prominent performing arts group, presented a trio of compelling plays. Each piece offered a distinct flavour—ranging from heartfelt drama to sharp satire and uproarious comedy—beautifully reflecting the artistic breadth and emotional depth of contemporary Indian theatre.

Tender Reflections: Kambakht Ishq

Staged on May 31 at 3:00 PM, Kambakht Ishq, penned by Satyaprakash, offered a poignant look into the emotional needs of the elderly. Through the lives of two aging individuals coping with loneliness, the play delicately unraveled themes of companionship, vulnerability, and the quiet ache of growing old. With subtle dialogue and restrained yet powerful performances, the production struck a deep emotional chord with its audience, rendering it one of the most moving performances of the festival.

Comic Wit and Social Satire: The Proposal

Staged twice—on May 24 at 11:30 AM and again on June 1 at 3:00 PM—Anton Chekhov's iconic one-act play The Proposal was brought to life with remarkable flair. What begins as a simple marriage proposal spirals hilariously into a heated argument over land and pets. The actors' crisp comic timing, expressive body language, and fluid stage presence transformed the absurdity into biting social satire. It was a delightful reminder that laughter, when layered with irony, becomes a powerful mirror to societal quirks.

Laughter with a Message: Kallu Nai MBBS

Inspired by Molière's classic farce and performed on May 24 at 12:30 PM, May 31 and June 1 at 4:15 PM, Kallu Nai MBBS followed the misadventures of a drunk barber who is forcibly made to act as a doctor. Behind the laugh-out-loud moments lay darker undertones of domestic abuse and the systemic marginalization of women. The fast-paced narrative, witty dialogues, and exaggerated characters created a comic spectacle that managed to entertain while prompting deeper thought.

Direction and Technical Excellence

All three plays were skillfully directed by **Shyam Kumar**, whose vision and theatrical sensibility were evident in the seamless staging. The ensemble cast—Vishwajeet, Munmun, Shivangi, Aman Kumar, Dhananjay, Raman Kumar, Rajan, and Saumya—delivered heartfelt and dynamic performances. Behind the scenes, the production team added immense value: Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh (stage management), Himanshu and Nisha (assistant stage managers), Payal and Raj Rani (makeup), Rohit Prasad and Rekha Devi (costumes), and Vansh Rathore (music coordination).

Natsamrat's theatrical offering was more than a cultural event—it was a celebration of theatre's power to evoke, provoke, and connect. Through humour, emotion, and satire, the festival reminded us that the stage is not just a space for

performance, but a living, breathing dialogue with society itself.

Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain— A Mirror to Modern Madness

On April 29, 2025, the Sammukh auditorium of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, witnessed a deeply moving theatrical experience as part of the '**Katharang**' series. The play "**Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain**", presented by Mailorang (Maithili Lok Rang) and staged by Sambhav Theatre Group, resonated profoundly with the audience. Based on a powerful short story of the same name by noted writer Umashankar Chaudhary, the production explored the contradictions and

emotional fragmentation in contemporary society through an impactful dramatic interpretation.

Directed by Professor Devendra Raj Ankur, the play reflected a sharp eye for detail and a deep sense of social sensitivity. He intricately wove the essence of the original story into the dramatic structure, using characters as instruments to deliver a scathing commentary on present-day societal realities.

Amit Saxena delivered a layered and sensitive portrayal of the son. His internal conflict, the clash between duty and emotion, and the discomfort arising from Ayodhya Babu's supposed madness were brought out with striking realism.

Hema Bisht, as the mother, left an unforgettable impression – especially in the final scene where her silent, broken presence on the deathbed conveyed volumes. Her performance evoked quiet grief and emotional depth.

Amitabh Srivastava brought the complex and multi-dimensional character of Ayodhya Babu alive on stage. His portrayal transcended mere eccentricity, revealing a soul tormented by truth and resistance against social hypocrisy. His 'madness' became a metaphor for the courage to speak truth in a world of convenient lies.

The lighting design by Raghav Prakash Mishra played a vital role in enhancing the emotional gravity of the scenes. Particularly in the strained moments between mother and son, the lighting subtly underlined the unspoken pain and tension.

With its naturalistic language, piercing dialogues, and emotionally resonant characters, the play captivated the audience from beginning to end. It was not merely a source of entertainment, but an invitation to introspect.

"Ayodhya Babu Sanak Gaye Hain" compels us to ask: who is truly mad – the one who dares to speak the truth, or the one who comfortably lives with lies? This remarkable production by

Maithili Lok Rang and Sambhav Theatre Group stood out as a shining example of theatrical depth, creativity, and social commitment. By the final scene, the audience was not only emotionally moved but left with lingering questions and reflections.

Sanskar Bharti Kala Sankul Once Again became the Witness of a Mesmerizing Journey of Art, Devotion, and Dialogue

The monthly symposium began with a heartfelt tribute to the innocent civilians martyred in the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam. All present members observed two minutes of silence, expressing their emotions in an unspeakable way. The entire atmosphere seemed to be immersed in a silent prayer.

On the auspicious occasion of the lighting of the lamp, all distinguished guests performed the lamp lighting ceremony, illuminating the stage.

Following this, a melodious stream of music began. The soulful singing by Mr. Vijay Rawal and Mr. Veer Mani Trivedi touched the hearts of everyone present. Their mastery of voice filled the atmosphere with unseen compassion and hope.

The main attraction of the symposium was the analytical discussion on the theatrical presentation **'Arey Gadbadi Ho Gayi',** inspired by the Sanskrit play '**Bhagavadjukkam**' by Bodhayan, directed by Raj Upadhyay, and performed by Navras Group.

In this discussion, the depth of the story, authenticity of the acting, the liveliness of the stage arrangement, and the artistic features of the entire presentation were examined in detail. Critics appreciated the dedication and effort of the Navras Group artists, stating that the presentation not only entertained but also sparked deep contemplation.

The Navras Group artists were deeply moved after hearing such a heartfelt and in-depth review of their performance. They expressed that such analytical discussions inspired them to further deepen their theatrical practice. They also expressed their gratitude to Sanskar Bharti for providing such a valuable platform.

To elevate the dignity of the event, the presence of several distinguished guests was noteworthy. Dr. Prashant Upadhyay, Delhi Province Minister, Senior NSD theater artist Mr. Pradeep Mohanty, Mrs. Shashi Prabha Tiwari, educationist Dr. Ruchika,

and Mr. Manish Jha honored the event with their esteemed presence.

The success of the program was greatly aided by the contributions of Delhi Province’s stage art coordinator Mr. Raj Upadhyay, senior theater artist Shyam Kumar, Shraboni Saha, Garima Rani, Vishwadeep, Sneha Mukherjee, Raman Kumar, Saurav Tripathi, Pradeep Pathak, Mrityunjay, Brijesh, Shivam, Sushank, and Sakshi.

The event was skillfully and warmly conducted by Bharti Dag, and Mrs. Shruti Sinha concluded the art-filled evening with a heartfelt vote of thanks.

22nd Natsamrat Theatre Festival: A Captivating Blend of Humor, Satire, and Human Emotions

The prestigious Delhi-based theatre group *Natsamrat* mesmerized audiences with a diverse range of plays at the **22nd Natsamrat Theatre Festival**. Held on March 15 and 16, the festival showcased four plays, each offering a unique theatrical experience. From comedy and satire to deep human emotions, the performances left a lasting impression on theatre enthusiasts.

The festival opened with **“The Proposal”**, a play by Anton Chekhov that brilliantly captured his signature satirical style. The story revolved around a young man proposing marriage to his neighbor’s unmarried daughter, but instead of a romantic conversation, a hilarious argument over land and a pet dog ensued. The humor was not just in the dialogues but also in the absurdity of the situation and the characters’ temperaments, keeping the audience thoroughly entertained.

Next came **“Kallu Nai MBBS”**, a play that delivered a blend of humor and social commentary. The story followed a drunken barber who regularly abused his wife, only to be outwitted by her cleverness. Meanwhile, two servants searching for a doctor to treat their master’s mute daughter were tricked into believing that the barber was a doctor—but only after receiving a sound beating. The fast-paced narrative, physical

comedy, and sharp dialogues made this play a crowd favorite.

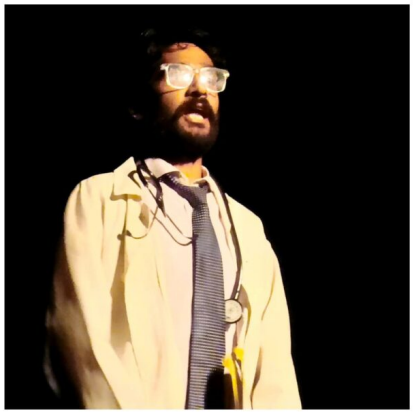
On March 16, **“Chekhov Ka Sansar”** brought two of Anton Chekhov’s most celebrated stories to life. This performance not only delivered humor but also highlighted the depth of Chekhov’s storytelling, capturing the irony and struggles of human existence. The interplay of light-hearted comedy with underlying social commentary made this an engaging production.

The final play, **“Kambakht Ishq”**, struck a chord with the audience by portraying the loneliness of two elderly individuals who find solace in each other’s company. The play beautifully explored the importance of companionship in old age, making it a deeply emotional experience. The actors’ nuanced performances and heartfelt dialogues ensured that the message resonated with the audience.

Directed by **Shyam Kumar**, all four productions were masterfully staged, bringing out the essence of each story while maintaining their distinct theatrical styles. The performances by **Vishwajeet, Munmun, Shivangi, Aman Kumar, Vansh Rathore, Raman Kumar, Dhananjay, Kaushal Chauhan, Ansh and Rajan K. Bhatheja** were outstanding. Stage management was efficiently handled by **Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh**, with **Himanshu and Nisha** assisting. **Payal and Raj Rani** managed makeup, while **Rohit Prasad, Rekha Devi, and Manu Kumar Singh** worked on costumes. **Vansh Rathore’s** contribution to music operation, played a significant role in enhancing the theatrical experience. The Natya Utsav was held at LTG Auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi.

Overall, the **22nd Natsamrat Theatre Festival** was a resounding success, offering a delightful mix of humor, satire, and emotional depth. Each play had a unique appeal, ensuring that the audience left with unforgettable memories of this vibrant theatrical celebration.

Natsamrat’s Theatrical Saga: A Celebration of Drama, Depth, and Delight



Delhi’s esteemed theatre group *Natsamrat* recently staged a grand theatrical festival at LTG Auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi. Held on January 18, January 25-26, and February 1,

2025, the festival featured nine performances of seven different plays. This remarkable achievement showcased the group’s commitment to presenting diverse themes and its ability to offer audiences a rich and varied theatrical experience.

The festival opened on January 18 with plays infused with humor and satire. Anton Chekhov’s *The Proposal* brought laughter with its witty depiction of a marriage proposal entangled in disputes over land and dogs. *Kallu Nai MBBS*, a satirical take on domestic violence, used humor to highlight a serious social issue while engaging the audience with its sharp writing and compelling performances.

On January 25 and 26, the festival continued with a variety of plays exploring different themes. *Meri Biwi Ki Shaadi* depicted a man’s paranoia about his own death and his wife’s uncertain future, blending comedy with emotional depth. *Kambakht Ishq* sensitively portrayed loneliness and old age with a humorous touch. The following day saw a repeat performance of *The Proposal*, which once again delighted audiences. *Chekhov Ka Sansar* offered an insightful look into two of Chekhov’s stories, capturing his signature satire and deep understanding of human nature. The evening concluded with another staging of *Kallu Nai MBBS*, reinforcing its impact with a fresh yet equally engaging performance.

The festival culminated on February 1 with *Kuch Tum Kaho Kuch Hum Kahein*, a play that explored the complexities of relationships, made even more compelling by the stellar performances of Munmun and Vishwajeet. *Kallu Nai MBBS* was staged for the third time, proving its popularity and ability to captivate audiences with every rendition.

Each play was brought to life by an ensemble cast, including Vishwajit, Munmun, Shivangi, Aman Kumar, Vansh Rathore, Raman Kumar, Shammi, and Archana. Under the skilled direction of Shyam Kumar, the performances struck a fine balance between

humor and depth, making each scene memorable. The sharp, thought-provoking dialogues kept the audience engaged, while the well-crafted set design and costumes added to the immersive experience.

Natsamrat's theatre festival was not just a celebration of performance arts but also a reflection of the richness of Indian theatre. The event demonstrated the power of humor as a vehicle for social messaging and reinforced the boundless potential of the stage. Staging nine performances of seven different plays is a significant accomplishment, and *Natsamrat* executed it flawlessly. The festival left the audience with a deeper appreciation for theatre, making it an unforgettable experience.

Natsamrat's 6th Mumbai Theatre Festival Won the Hearts of the Audience

The **“6th Mumbai Theatre Festival”** organized by Natsamrat at the Creative Adda Auditorium in Versova, Mumbai staged many wonderful plays on 3rd, 11th & 12th January. These plays not only entertained the audience but also presented deep social and emotional issues effectively.

3rd January: **‘Nithalla’** and **‘Napunsak’** staged

On the first day of the festival, the play ‘Nithalla’ based on the story of Harishankar Parsai was staged. It was adapted by Kuldeep Kunal and directed and solo acted by Nagendra Kumar Sharma. This play was the story of an ideal ‘Nithalla’ who

selflessly devotes his life for the betterment of the society. The play deeply impressed the audience by highlighting the conflict between selfishness and selflessness.

Nipunsak was then staged, written and directed by Manjul Bhardwaj. This play presents the life struggle and agony of eunuchs. The director brought this complex subject to life with his acting and sensitive presentation. Shivani's music made the presentation more effective.

January 11: Presentation of **'Darogaji Chori Ho Gayi'**

On January 11, the play 'Darogaji Chori Ho Gayi' written by Jaivardhan and directed by Chandra Shekhar Sharma was staged. Presented by Mask Players Art Group, this play exposed the corruption prevailing in the government system and the deviant tendencies of the youth through humor and satire.

In this play, Nikhil Jha (Daroga and Detective), Ashish Sharma (Babu), Shipra Jain (Deepak), and Eva Dandona (Pooja) made the audience laugh with their impressive acting. The play tried to show how the youth running after a glamorous life take the path of crime. This presentation gave a social message along with humor.

12 January: **'The Proposal'** and **'Kuch Tum Kaho Kuch Hum Kahen'** staged

On the last day of the festival, Anton Chekhov's famous play 'The Proposal' was staged. This comedy-satire play was based on family relations and property disputes. Vishwajeet, Munmun, Aman Kumar, and Raman Kumar made the audience laugh a lot with their excellent acting. The story showed funny arguments during a marriage proposal by a young man, which the audience applauded.

The second play 'Kuch Tum Kaho Kuch Hum Kahen' presented an emotional story. Vishwajeet and Munmun played the roles of Dr. Anand and Mansi in this play directed by Shyam Kumar. The play

beautifully presented the themes of life’s struggle, human emotions and inspiration. The chemistry of both the actors moved the audience.

The contribution of the technical team in all the plays was commendable. Stage manager Sunil Rathore, music coordinator Aman, makeup experts Payal and Chhobi Saha, and Shyam Kumar in lighting design played an important role in bringing the plays closer to reality.

The audience appreciated all the plays. Nithalla and Napunsak touched upon sensitive issues deeply, while Darogaji Chori Ho Gayi gave a social message with humour. The Proposal and Kuch Tum Kaho Kuch Hum Kahen presented complex topics of life in a light-hearted manner.

The festival proved that theatre is not only a medium of entertainment, but it is also an effective medium to show the mirror to the society and inspire it to think deeply.

An Unforgettable Evening of Theatre by “Mask Players Art Group”

The “Mask Players Art Group” theatre group organised two plays on 21 December 2024 at the Blank Canvas Theatre of LTG, Delhi. The first presentation was “Dedh Inch Upar” which was invited and was performed by the theatre group Banjara of Haryana. In the play, a middle-aged hero is struggling with his memories in a bar against the backdrop of the Second World War. He loved his dead wife immensely but he himself hid from her that she was a part of a secret campaign against Nazism. This solo performance, entangled in many questions and answers like the untimely death of his wife, the helplessness of not being able to save her, the reasons for her death and betrayal, presents many truths of life before the audience. Senior artist Vijay Bhatotia brought this story of Nirmal Verma to life on stage with his direction and acting and kept the audience captivated till the end.

The second play “Daroga ji Chori Ho Gayi” was performed by the organizing team which was written by Jaivardhan and directed by Chandra Shekhar Sharma. The good acting of the actors in the play made the audience laugh a lot. People were rolling with laughter at the witty dialogues. On one hand, the play draws attention to the corruption of government officials, on the other hand, it shows the increasing tendency of the youth to do things like theft and robbery along with studies to live a dazzling life. They do not even think about how much hardship their parents go through for them. The message of the play was meaningful. In the play, the role of Babu was played by Ashish Sharma, the role of Deepak was played by Shipra Jain, the role of Fattelal and the role of the inspector was played by Nikhil Jha and Mamta Rani as a female constable received applause from the audience. In the backstage, Jatin Shaurya did the lighting, Manoj did the music direction and makeup, Sarita Rana did the costumes and Rakesh Sharma and Sangeeta Suyal did the set and props.

Natsamrat Delights Delhi Audiences with Laughter-Filled Performances

Play Scene

Delhi based Natsamrat again came up with its plays which were full of laughter and four plays which were loved by the audience.

Two plays were staged on 16th November. At 3:00 PM Anton Chekhov's famous story "The Proposal" was staged. The Proposal is the story of a young man who proposes marriage to his neighbour's unmarried daughter. The story turns worse when the three of them start arguing over whose property it is and whose dog is better. At 4:15 PM the same evening, the play "Kallu Barber MBBS" written by Moliere was staged in which a barber is always drunk and beats his wife. The barber's wife promises herself that she will teach her husband a lesson. During this time she meets two servants who are looking for a doctor to cure their master's daughter's muteness. The barber's wife tells him that there is such a doctor here, but he does not consider himself a doctor until he is beaten up properly. Both the servants beat up the barber and force him to become a doctor and take him to their master. Later on, the play takes a very interesting turn.

On 17th November, two plays were staged. At 3 pm, the play "Haye Mera Dil" written by Ranbir Singh, which is the story of

a delusional patient who believes that he is going to die and is worried about what will happen to his wife after him, she is very innocent, she will not be able to take care of herself, so he wants to get his wife married again. And later on, the play takes a different turn. At 4:15 pm the same evening, the play “Kambakht Ishq” written by Satya Prakash, which is the story of two old people who have fallen ill due to loneliness and when they meet each other, they understand that they need a support, so that they can share their loneliness.

All the four plays were directed by Shyam Kumar. Among the actors Vishwajeet, Munmun, Shivangi, Arvind Shandilya, Aman Kumar, Vansh Rathore, Raman Kumar and Shammi played their roles brilliantly. Stage managers Sunil Rathore and Suraj Singh, stage manager assistants Himanshu and Nisha, makeup Payal, costume assistants Rohit Prasad and Rekha Devi, music director Vansh Rathore. The play was staged at LTG auditorium Mandi House New Delhi.

A Masterful Comedy of Deception: *Gorakhdhanda* Delights Audiences with Humor and Insight

On November 10, the Mask Players Art Group brought to life Jayvardhan’s comedy play Gorakhdhanda at Gurugram’s Rang Parivartan Auditorium, delighting audiences with laughter and charm under the skilled direction of Chandrashekhar Sharma.

The storyline of Gorakhdhanda is a clever, layered satire on

deception and morality, following the antics of a crafty property dealer and his equally sly servant. The two exploit a unique business model—illegally renting out government houses. Enlisting the help of a resourceful actor friend, they devise numerous ways to extract extra money from unsuspecting tenants. They pose as fake police officers, manufacture absurd emergencies, and even cut off tenants' cable wires, all to manipulate and swindle money out of them.

However, their clever games reach a turning point when they encounter a new tenant, Geeta, a quick-witted woman who begins to see through their schemes. Unlike previous tenants, Geeta decides to fight back, taking matters into her own hands. Her pushback throws the scheming trio into a spiral of missteps, confusion, and unintended consequences. This leads to a brilliantly funny climax, where each character is forced to confront the absurdity of their deception, making for a deeply engaging and humorous plot twist.

Chandrashekhar Sharma’s direction is seamless, reflecting both his understanding of the play’s humor and his ability to highlight social commentary without losing the comedic essence. Sharma managed to balance the farcical elements of the story with a simplicity that made the scenes relatable and accessible. His careful pacing kept the audience engaged, and he ensured that every punchline landed. The transitions between scenes were smooth, and the intricate dynamics between characters were allowed to unfold naturally, making for a cohesive performance that held the audience’s attention from start to finish.

The cast of Gorakhdhanda shone on stage, each actor embracing their character with authenticity and energy. Ashish Sharma, Nikhil Jha, Eva Dandona, Pushkar Sagar, Ashutosh Srivastava, Jatin, and Mayank Sharma added rich layers to the play with their roles, enhancing the comedic timing and providing moments of slapstick that were both skillful and hilarious.

Together, the ensemble cast displayed a natural chemistry, enhancing each other’s performances and creating a lively atmosphere on stage. Their nuanced expressions, quick timing, and humorous dialogues conveyed not only the humor but also the subtle social critique embedded in the play.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated technical team brought the world of Gorakhdhanda to life with admirable precision. Sarita Rana, Manoj, Rakesh Sharma, Sangeeta Suyal, and Mamta Rani were instrumental in handling the set changes, props, and lighting that supported the narrative. Their efforts ensured that each scene flowed effortlessly, with no disruptions, adding polish to the production. The set design was simple but effective, allowing the audience to focus on the characters while still providing the necessary realism for the setting. Lighting and sound cues were timely, which helped to heighten the comedic moments and emphasized the shifts in tone as the story progressed.

For those who missed the Gurugram performance, there’s good news—the play will be staged again on November 16 at Blank Canvas Studio, Mandi House, New Delhi, promising another evening of laughter and insight.