

DAILY EXCELSIOR

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Kashmiri translation of 'Dumb Waiter' staged EKTA's nine- day Budshah drama fest concludes

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JAMMU, Jan 7: Being considered as major event in the recent history of Kashmir theatre, the nine-day theatre festival organized by EKTA- Ensemble Kashmir Theatre Akademi, concluded, at Abhinav Theatre, here today.

The initiative, to provide an occasion to present day practitioners of theatre in Valley to share platform with theatre groups of Jammu, was sponsored by Ministry of Culture, New Delhi in collaboration with J&K Cultural Academy. In all nine plays were performed by groups from different parts of Valley, Udhampur and Jammu in the festival.

The concluding day of the festival was marked by a competent performance of 'Kol-Baehrei', Bashir Bhawani's Kashmiri translation of Harold Pinter's 'Dumb Waiter'.

Based on the original absurd play in English written in 1957, the play has two characters 'Ben' and 'Gus', who are hiding in a dingy basement. Hired by some mysterious organization to undertake an assignment, but during the wait period they feel nervous and claustrophobic, lost and feel exploited by the unknown third character, the Dumb Waiter, who is exercising his control by letters of instructions through a window.

While 'Gus' is in the kitchen quenching his thirst, 'Ben' gets the command to complete his assignment. 'Gus' is suddenly pushed without his revolver, Jacket, shirt-thus himself becomes the victim of the behind-the-screen master-mind, ultimately raising the question who is the terrorist.

The play which seemingly carries a great relevance with the situation in the Valley, where no one knows who is dictating the lives of people, who is exploiting, and who is paying the cost. It urges for the change of the mind set of those who are being misled, forced to act as mercenaries for the benefit of the some unknown exploiter only.

The characters of 'Ben' and 'Gus' were enacted admirably by Shahnawaz Bhat and Junaid Ahmed Rather, who kept the audience engrossed and expectant for a logical sequence of events, only to be left with a state of introspection to have a relook at their own roles in the theatre of absurd being played out day after day in their lives.

Directed by Bashir Bhawani, the play for its contemporary relevance could be called as one of the significant gains of the festival. The set design was executed by M. Maqbool and the window 'trolley' operated by Shaukat H Mir was a show of appreciable technical expertise that added a kind of element of spectacle and helped in creating the 'suspense' in the minds of the spectators.

Today's function, conducted by Gulzar Ganaie, was also attended by veteran theatre personalities like Moti Lal Kemmu and M. P. Sharma.