

Kathakar-International Storytellers Festival

A Report

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts hosted '*Kathakar-International Storytellers Festival*' from 30 January to 1 February, 2015 in collaboration with the British Council and Nivesh-an NGO. Seven storytellers – three from India and four from abroad performed at the festival. Storytellers from India were: Prof. Vettavarayan and his troupe from Tindivanam, Tamil Nadu ('Villupattu'), Shri Nayak Baldevbhai D. and his troupe from Kalol, Gujarat ('Baithak ni Bhavai') and Padma Shri Nameirakpam Ongbi Ibemni Devi from Imphal, Manipur ('Khongjom Parba'). The four international storytellers were Swedish storyteller, Ms. Emily Parish (United Kingdom), Ms. Sarah Rundle (United Kingdom), Shri Daniel Hall (Hungary) and African storyteller, Shri Godfrey Duncan (TUUP) (United Kingdom).

The festival featured stories from histories, epics, social themes, folktales, tales from animal kingdoms and much more. Prof. Vettavarayan's cultural troupe musically presented stories on history, religion, personality and social awareness whereas the group from Gujarat narrated the history of the state, the Bhavai tradition and gender sensitive themes with a dash of humour added to all their theatrical presentations. N. Ibemni Devi sang 'Khongjom Parba' sharing the story of Anglo-Manipuri war in the year 1891.

Ms. Parish narrated folktales, animal stories from Europe, India and Scandinavian region while stories from the Silk Route were presented by Ms. Rundle. Shri Daniel Hall read out his translated versions of Hungarian folktales. Using gestures and mimicry, TUUP enlightened the Indian audience with his traditional stories from African region.

Storytelling sessions were held in the morning for school children on 30 and 31 January, 2015. Over a thousand children from government and public schools attended the sessions. The participating schools were Kendriya Vidyalaya, Arjangarh; Government Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Shahpur Jat; Amity Institute of Education, Noida; Maharaja Agrasen Public School, Ashok Vihar; Cambridge Foundation School, Rajouri Garden; DAV Public School, Shreshta Vihar and Pragyan School, Greater Noida. These sessions were also attended by teachers from these schools and those under training.

The sessions were informative, interactive and deeply engaged students to listen and comprehend narratives from different regions. Ms. Emily Parish involved them in following the gimmicks and gestures she was using during her sessions. Prof. Vettavarayan translated his stories on Sathya Harichandra and Clean India movement in English language while Shri Nayak Baldevbhai D. in between explained in Hindi, the history of Patan, Gujarat and his stories based on gender sensitive issues.

The evening shows (30, 31 January and 1 February, 2015) were open to the public and were attended in good numbers by individuals, university students and families with their young kids.

The Garba Raas performed by Bhavai group from Gujarat was joined by the audience in full fervor at the end of their performance both in the morning and evening. Shri Duncan made the audience respond to his beats and rhymes in between his storytelling sessions.

A panel discussion was also held to discuss the techniques of storytelling and the necessity for its preservation on the evening of 30 January, 2015. The participants were: Dr. Mangalam Swaminathan (Programme Director-Kaladarsana Division, IGNCa); Ms. Shaguna Gahilote (Curator-Nivesh); Prof. Vettavarayan; Ms. Emily Parish, Ms. Sarah Rundle and Shri Daniel Hall.

The event was successfully executed. The ambience of the amphitheatre below a peepul tree, lighting, seating arrangement on steps and food stall added extra charm to the festival.