

## A dialogue on Proscenium Theatre

From the editor's diary

Like any other organs of mass media, proscenium theatre is very much a part of our life. The illustrators in this medium are as tough as those of the newsmakers. Like, the newsmen, who harness all their energies to alert or make aware of the day today happenings around us, these proscenium players forecast the reality of the present contemporary society. However, a slight difference between the two is that, while newsmen condemn the venality of politicians, law enforcers and corrupt administrators in the form of direct reporting or editorial write up; the proscenium players interpret the retrospection of the societal conflict and tension with stylization of the body movement and dialogue. However, this intrapersonal oral medium of communication cannot rally its impact to the society without the help of newsmen due to the limitation of its receivers. The paradox arises here is that, this society still does not recognize the importance of this medium of mass media - on its roles on reforming the society. The ignorance of the theatre culture as a source of wisdom by the so-called bureaucrats or politicians is the most unfortunate part.

Thanks to the State Tourism Department and the Art and Culture Department or the Government of Manipur. The theatre medium is once more put to the top by recognizing its value and by including it as a part of the Sangai Tourism festival. And thanks to the Director of NT Theatre Manipur and his team for making the dream of theatre lover come alive by taking the major role in organizing the Asian Theatre Festival at Hongnemsang, Changangei, Imphal West. Well, the entry of proscenium theatre during the beginning of 1900 A.D. to the soil of Manipur, brought by the than colonial rulers to impact the societal culture for their administrative conveniences, perhaps turns as a boon rather than serving their purpose. The beginning was indeed strategic; people were almost influenced by the language and cultural tradition performed by the artists. It was well noted by scholars and theatre critics like Professor N. Tombi, Prof. L. Damodar, Dr. Lamabam Gojendro etc. that, since, proscenium theatre was first performed in this state during 1902, the popularity of this art grows far and wide. Bangali language, which was preconceivedly accepted as the language of theatre, became popular among certain section of people of those days. People who assumed themselves as elite class were proud to use the language in addition to their mother tongue to show off their living status (there might also be other reason to let the people think themselves as member of a well to do family by using Bangali language). The performers who were brought by the colonial administrators had different plan rather than serving the purpose. The mind of an artist always differs with those of the policy maker. Indeed, performers always felt the soft corner; they were mostly driven by emotions. And it does make surprises as this medium turns as a lesson to the people of this land; to learn the love their culture. The logic behind the introduction of proscenium culture need not go deeper, as it is a matter of records.

However, those colonial administrators, never did realized that the rich culture of this soil with a long traditions of performing different kinds of art form such as; lai haraba, mukna kangjei, khulung eesei, maibi jagoi etc. at which even the coming of the 'Vaisnav' culture, during 18th century AD, could not demolished its richness other than adaptation. That is one reason at which the people of this land began to utilize proscenium culture for their own cause.

Instead of dissolving their mind and soul to the art brought from outside, the highly potential artist, playwrights, and directors started performing the original context of this land. For instance, in 1922 Larenmayang Ibhogohal wrote NARA SINGH, in 1924 Dr. L. Kamal wrote DEVJANI, in 1930 Sorokhaibam Lalit wrote SATI KHONGNANG and ARREPPA MARUP, in 1931 and 1935 Arambam Dorendrajit wrote MOIRANG THOIBI and BHAGYACHANDRA, in 1939 Hijam Anganghal wrote POKTABI IBEMMA, etc. these are few of the example. All these plays provoked the origin, identity and self-realization to the people of this land. These plays had indeed implanted the concept of self-realization among the common people.

After Manipur regained independent from the British and was annexed to the Indian union on 15 October 1949, theatre trend changes as according to the passage of time. Playwrights, Directors and artist started discussing the societal structure of Manipur. And sometime they started criticizing openly on the colonial-hang-over mindedness of the people of this state. As to the word of renowned theatre critics and scholar, Professor L. Damodar - the later part of 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s heralded Modernisms or Adhunik in Manipuri literature and drama bringing forth new perception and intense awareness hitherto unknown. There was acute consciousness and sensibility of living in a period of crisis in the minds of the writers because of the first changing scenario in the politico-socio-economic conditions, global movement of the youths and above all nihilism. The impact of science and technology, psychology and philosophies for changes swept to Manipur. The indispensable conditions of the times and the dynamics of change are responsible for the metamorphosis of any art form including theatre.

This was the juncture where renown playwright, Gitchandra Tongbra (1913-1996) utilized theatre platform or proscenium auditorium as a forum for discussion, debate and evaluation of the problems of the society and the human condition. To his anguish over the societal phenomena of those days he had written play like 'Chengni Khujai' (the begging bowl) which pictured the present democratic system, 'Hingminnaba' which he discussed on the conflict of the society due to differences of religion. At one of his play 'Yaosang Kangou' he tried the people to think again on the problem of so many festival to this little land.

The invasion of westernization which had greatly affected the traditional Manipuri society was critically analyzed and displayed to public by late Arambam Somarendro at his plays "Judge Sahib Ki Eemung" (1968), "Leipaklei" (1993), and "Sanatombi" (2001). The playwright has also reminded the people of this state about those forgotten heroes who fight against the Burmese invasion, during seven years devastation period at his play "Sakhangkhidrabala lanmi" (1989). The face of Manipuri proscenium theatre changes fast according to the passage of time. From dealing to entertaining factors and cultural enhancement, the theatre trends has directly inclined towards the reality of life. Certain splendored theatre personality like - (late) Heisnam Kanhalal, Lokendro Arambam and Ratan Thiyam etc., has started neo-contemporary theatres which has emphasized more towards the bringing for peace to this land in particulars and the world in general.

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## National & International News

### Sikkim schools lead the way for sustainable development

**ANI Gangtok Nov. 27:** One of the major issues concerning humans today is protection of the environment. Two schools in Sikkim are leading the way by incorporating environmental activities in their curriculum with the aim of educating students about the need to protect and conserve nature for better sustainability. Sikkim's Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has repeatedly stressed on the need to protect and conserve nature for better sustainability, and various schools are now taking up environmental activities. The Bongten Government School has undertaken several green initiatives to maintain balanced ecology and biodiversity.

The school was conferred with two awards— Sustainability and Biodiversity by WIPRO at Bangalore in February and TN Khoshoo Earthian award 2015. Apart from the daily curriculum, sanitation programmes and other initiatives are being implemented in schools to create awareness among students. The schools also carry out comprehensive evaluation to monitor the progress of such programmes in schools. "This is the first time that CCTV cameras have been installed in a government school in Sikkim. We have received the State Green School Award and several awards which are really appreciable. The

school also provides mid-day meals to the students," said N.K Karki, Principal of Bongten School. The Government Senior Secondary School in Hee Yangthang, located 40 kilometers from the Geyzing town, has established itself as a renowned centre of education and ranks among the best schools in the entire western region. Various activities have been undertaken by the school, including bee farming, gardening, small cattle farm, vegetable farm and others, with the aim to provide practical knowledge about different ways of farming. The school was awarded the prestigious 'Paryavaran Mitra Puraskar, 2015' in an Exemplar

School category for its contributions to sustainable development. The school has also been conferred with the 'State Green Schools Award, 2015'. "To manage these waste products, our children are engaged in various activities for better utilization. Nowadays people burn tyres and use it for camp fires, especially during New Year celebrations. So, this is very hazardous and injurious to health. It is damaging our biodiversity and environment. So, we are looking for ways to use waste products like tyres in making tables and chairs etc. It is durable also," said N D Rai, Principal of Hee Yangthang School.

### Nabha jailbreak: Armed men help Khalistan Liberation Force Chief Harminder Singh, five others escape

**Chandigarh, Nov. 27:** A group of armed men, disguised as cops broke into Nabha jail on Sunday morning and helped as many as six inmates, including Khalistan

Liberation Force militant Harminder Singh Mintoo, escape. Mintoo was arrested in 2014 by Punjab police from Indira Gandhi International Airport on his return



from Thailand. Kashmiri Singh, who was arrested for an attack on Shiv Sena Punjab Secretary Harvinder Soni in April last year, also escaped as the armed men resorted to heavy firing. The other four who escaped from the jail were gangsters Vicky Gounder, Gurpreet Sekhon, Amandeep Dhonian and Kulpreet Neetu aka Neeta Deol. According to police, six to eight persons in police uniforms came on four vehicles Toyota Fortuner (white color) Hyundai Verna (white), Honda City (white) and Hyundai i20 (beige color) and fired several shots before escaping with the six inmates. Police believed they fled towards Haryana. An alert was sounded in

the adjoining states of Haryana, Rajasthan and special check posts were set up to nab the accused. Patiala Range Deputy Inspector General, A S Chahal said the armed men broke into the jail between 8:30 am to 9:00 am on the pretext that they had come to take some inmate for a court hearing. Chahal said 25 to 30 empty shells had been recovered from the site. DIG said the men were attired in police uniforms with one of the men wearing the uniform of a Sub Inspector and remaining wearing uniforms of constable ranks. Mintoo is allegedly involved in a number of cases including for an attack on Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in 2008.

### 2 pilots killed in tourist plane crash in French Alps

**Grenoble, Nov. 26:** The bodies of two pilots killed when their tourist plane crashed in the French Alps were recovered today after intense searches in the mountains east of Chambéry, the city's prosecutor said. The two men, who have not yet been identified, had taken off from Dortmund in Germany yesterday, according to the Chambéry prosecutor who is investigating the cause of the accident in the Savoie region of eastern France. The two-seater tourist plane was heading to the French city of Albertville and a search began

yesterday evening when it failed to land as scheduled. The wreckage was spotted on Mount Trelod in the Bauges mountains with an altitude of around 2,200 metres. "The aircraft had slammed into the eastern face of the summit during bad weather conditions," the prosecutor said. Rescuers on the ground brought down the bodies of the two victims on Saturday. An autopsy will be carried out Monday to determine if either of the pilots had fallen ill.

### Fresh snowfall in higher reaches of Kashmir

**PTI Srinagar, Nov. 27:** Many areas in the higher reaches of Kashmir division received fresh snowfall as the night temperature went down by several degrees across the Valley and Ladakh region. Fresh snowfall occurred in the higher reaches of Drass, Kargil and Zaskar areas in Ladakh region and in Gurez and other areas in upper reaches of the Valley last night, an official of the Meteorological Department here said. The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir received rain during

the night. The night temperature across the Valley and Ladakh region went down by several degrees, the official said. He said Srinagar the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir recorded the minimum temperature of zero degree Celsius, down by over four notches from the previous night's 4.3 degrees Celsius. Kupwara, in north Kashmir, registered the low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius a drop of over four degrees from the previous night's 2.7 degrees Celsius, he said.

### World leaders extend condolences on the demise of Fidel Castro

**New Delhi, Nov. 27:** World leaders including President Pranab Mukherjee, Vice President Hamid Ansari and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have extended condolences to the Cuban government and people of the country on the demise of Fidel Castro. In a tweet, Mr. Mukherjee described him as a friend of India. Mr. Mukherjee called him a revolutionary leader. In his message, Vice President Mr. Ansari said, people will continue to remember Castro for his role in the Non-Aligned Movement. In a series of tweets, Mr Modi said, Castro was

one of the most iconic personalities of the 20th century. Mourning the death of Fidel Castro, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the Cuban leader was an emblematic figure of the Cuban revolution. President Barack Obama also condoled the death of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, saying that history will record and judge the enormous impact of this singular figure on the people and world around him. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau marked the death of Cuba's revolutionary leader by calling him a remarkable leader.

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### 'US team to give their best to....'

Lucas W Reid, 27 years of age, an aerospace engineer, is from Idaho Falls, Idaho Seattle, Washington. He grew up in the family farm and has been riding horses since the age of three. He was introduced to polo at the age of 19 by his sister-in-law in college and immediately fell in love with the game. What Lucas finds very special about polo is the teamwork between the rider and the horse. "Every horse has a different personality and if the player doesn't adjust to the horse, it doesn't not matter good the player is", Lucas declares. Talking about Manipur, Lucas says, "the history and tradition that I have experienced here is one of a Kind". On Manipuri ponies, Lucas found them very impressive and that they play at a very high level. "It did take a couple of games to acclimatize to the smaller ponies but once I did, it was like playing at home". Lucas finds the tournament very enjoyable, "the sportsmanship and the camaraderie between the teams is what make polo so much fun. He also found the massive crowd which turns out to watch the games and cheer the teams very energizing. Lucas signed off by promising to try

their best to defend the title which the US team won in the last edition of this tournament. The US team has been playing here under the watchful eyes of Ed Armstrong, 63 years from Massachusetts presently living in Virginia, who is the coach and manager of the team. Ed is a management consultant for polo tournaments and has been playing polo for the last 30 years. Among the major coaching assignments for Ed include the Harvard University team in 1990 and Yale in 2015. Ed has also been associated with the US polo team and also ran a polo programme in schools for the US Polo Association. On playing here, Ed feels everything is the same except for the ponies. "It takes getting used to and as the players spent more time on these ponies, they will get better over a time". He rates the India B, USA and Australia among the top three in the tournament. Ed finds the local players to be "very skilled athletes" and gave a very encouraging news that "efforts are being made to bring over to America to gain more international experience".

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