Natyakrishti

Theater & Cultural Association of Greater Washington



presents KOLI KALER BULI

A manifestation of struggle between evil and humanity

DIRECTED BY JOGABRATA MAJUMDAR



Satya Yuga

Treta Yuga

Dwapara Yuga

Koli Yuga

Nov. 20, 2009 (Friday) at 8 PM

Rockville Civic Center Auditorium 603 Edmonston Drive. Rockville. MD 20851

Best Wishes to Natyakrishti

from



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Disclaimer: Natyakrishti apologizes for any inadvertent mistakes, omissions and misrepresentations in this publication.

www.natyakrishti.org

About Natyakrishti-TCAGW

Natyakrishti-TCAGW is an amateur theater and cultural group based in the greater Washington D.C., USA. It is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

In 1985, a group of enthusiastic, dedicated theater lovers in the greater Washington area, aspiring to initiate theatrical and cultural activities, formed an amateur drama group. A number of highly acclaimed dramas were staged by the group at the Durgapuja festivals organized by Sanskriti, Inc. of the Washington Metropolitan area. These dramas were also staged in various other cities of the USA, namely, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Virginia Beach, Fairfax and Columbia. Some of the members concurrently participated in the theatrical and cultural events organized by other groups like Manab Kalyan Kendra, Sanskriti, Mayur, etc. They performed in major roles in the dance dramas Achalayatan and Moha Mudgar, organized by the Hon'ble Ambassador Mr. Siddhartha Shankar Ray, which were staged in Kennedy Center, Gandhi Center and the Indian Embassy in Washington D.C.

With a view to developing histrionic talents, active association was initiated with renowned theater groups like Nandikar, Sayak, Calcutta High Court Advocates' Drama Association in India (Hon'ble Minister Ajit Panja's group). When the Indian groups performed here in the USA, these individuals were involved in different aspects of the productions, including stagecraft, sound, lighting, and performing in dramas like Chokh Galo, Meghnad Badh Kabya, Sesh Sakshatkar, Kabye-o-Ganey, Barda, Gotraheen, Daibaddha and Noti Binodini.

In 2006, Natyakrishti staged Rakta Karobi, a classic play by Rabindranath Tagore, in Maryland and also in Toronto, Canada. The performance drew accolade from the entire audience. The selection of a symbolic play like Tagore's Rakta Karobi, and its successful production, characterizes Natyakrishti's journey towards realization of its vision.

Natyakrishti is thankful for the inspiration and encouragement received from well-wishers in the community and several theater activists in the USA and Canada.

Previous Performances

Direction	Staged in			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Rockville, MD & Toronto, Canada			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Germantown, MD Monmouth J., NJ			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Rockville, MD Monmouth J., NJ			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Potomac, MD			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Potomac, MD Greenbelt, MD			
Past involvements with other groups:				
Kamala Devi	Washington, DC			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Bethesda, MD Cleveland, OH			
Jogabrata Majumdar	Bethesda, MD Boston. MA			
Siddhartha Roy	Washington, DC			
Jayantee Paine Ganguly	Greenbelt, MD			
Nihar Roy	Potomac, MD Greenbelt, MD			
	Jogabrata MajumdarJogabrata MajumdarJogabrata MajumdarJogabrata MajumdarJogabrata MajumdarGroups:Kamala DeviJogabrata MajumdarJogabrata Majumdar			

Kolikaler Buli Management Team

Advisory Committee:	Mihir Mitra, Asok Motayed, Pradip Ghosh, Alokadri Bose, Dhruba Chattoraj, Aloknanda Paul, Bratin Saha, Budhhadev Paul
Chairman:	Mihir Mitra
Secretary:	Dilip K. Som
Treasurer:	Rana Sinha
Community Outreach: Playbill:	Eva Chakraborty, Bharati Mitra, Kalobaran Bhattacharya, Rama Saha, Pradip Mazumdar, Bimal Sinha, Amit Adhya, Panchanon Chattopadhyay, Pradip Ray Suchismita Chattopadhyay, Dilip K. Som
Lobby Management:	Tapan Bera, Utpal Dasgupta
Ushers:	Sanchari Ghosh, Tanya Chatterjee, Sreya Sinha, Sree Sinha, Tiasha Bera, Sudevi Roy, Rajani Choudhury
Auditorium Management:	Dhruba Chattoraj, Kalobaran Bhattacharya
Director:	Jogabrata Majumdar

Behind the Scene

Advisor Production Manager Art Director Stage Design Stage Construction	Kamanasish Chakraborty, Madhumita Sircar Pradyot Niyogi Kajal Chakraborty (Kolkata) Saibal Dey, Aloke Roy, Kalyan Maitra, Prabal Bandyopadhyay, Archana Bandyopadhyay, Rabin Roy, Jayasree Majumdar
Music Directors	Barna Dey, Rana Sinha
Music	Shantanu Bagchi, Kumkum Bagchi, Anik Saha
Sound Director	Jayati Bera
Costume/Makeup	Archana Bandyopadhyay, Sutapa Ghose, Swati Sinha, Rana Sinha
Multimedia, Special Effects	Dilip Som
Light	Sudhansu Saha, Dibyendu Paul
Video	Gargi Roy
Stage Manager	Swati Sinha
Acknowledgement	Snehasis Chatterjee, Swarganga (Serampore), Debsankar Halder, Nandikar (Kolkata), Deb Kumar Chatterjee, Pramita Chatterjee

Cast in Order of Appearance

Adhikari	Kalyan Maitra
Darshak	Sikhin Mitra
Vivek(1)	Rana Sinha
Lolita	Archana Bandyopadhyay
Kangsha	Manoj Sircar
Balaram, Sudam, Vivek (2)	Saibal Dey
Krishna	Rabin Roy
Chitrabhanu, Bakasur	Prabal Bandyopadhyay
Pranantika	Mitali Saha
Karkat	Aloke Roy
Markat	Partha Ray
Daler Ek Karmi	Raghunath Chatterjee
Radha	Jayasree Majumdar

Patrons & Donors

Natyakrishti-TCAGW acknowledges the support, encouragement and donations from the following patrons and grand patrons for staging Kolikaler Buli.

Alokadri & Bandada Bose Amitava & Sanghamitra Dutta Asok & Saswati Motayed Bibhas & Maitreyee Bandy Bratin & Raka Saha Buddha Dev & Sikha Paul Dhruba & Sruti Chattoraj Dibyendu & Mita Paul Dilip & Aloka Paul **Dilip & Gurjeet Singh Som** Eva Chakraborty Jogabrata & Jayasree Majumdar Kalobaran & Indrani Bhattacharyya Kalyan & Rekha Maitra Kamanasish Chakraborty Manoj & Madhumita Sircar

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Kolikaler Buli - An Overview

Jogabrata Majumdar

Kolikaler Buli is a depiction of the ever-present struggle between evil and good, with a message that transcends beyond time. This struggle has prevailed over the ages, whenever evil has pervaded and the goodness of humanity has been awakened to resist it. Evil has emerged on the face of the earth in different periods of time, manifesting itself in different forms and shapes. But in the end, the eternal truth of human civilization has always prevailed by subjugating the evil. This is reflected in the philosophy of the civilized world, which preaches and urges to stand up against evil, irrespective of its form or shape.

The "Time", in our scriptures, is defined by four era or periods (*Kal* or *Yuga*) namely *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwapar* and *Koli*. The different eras are identified by their specific characteristics and hence can be distinguished from one another on the basis of that. Lord Vishnu is believed to have incarnated in different forms through the Yugas, and these forms are considered to be distinguishing attributes of the four *Kal* or *Yugas*. In *Satya Yuga*, Vishnu was the king of this universe and TRUTH prevailed in its entirety. In *Treta Yuga*, Vishnu incarnated as Rama and fought with the evil Ravana. In *Dwapar*, Vishnu appeared as Lord Krishna and played a key role in destroying the evil authority of the Kauravas. He took the role of a chariot driver (Sarathi) and advised Arjuna when he was in a predicament whether to fight against his relatives namely Durjyodhana, Dushasan etc., in the great war of Kurukshetra. It is at this time that Krishna showed his power of destruction to Arjuna through "Viswarup Darshan".

In the present time, in accordance with our scriptures, we are in "*Koli Kal*". The course of human civilization is being diverted from its destiny and led towards darkness of ignorance. This era is marked by several devastating wars like the two world wars and so many others. But this did not happen overnight. Journey of our civilization was directed toward a perilous roadmap, at the cost of ethics and dignity of human being. The state-hood of powerful nations invaded other territories, instituted slavery, molested dignified identities of mankind, and they engaged in capturing all the wealth and exerting supremacy at the cost of nobility and reverence toward humanity. In spite of so many wars, world peace failed to prevail. With the

advancement of science and technology, the world order took a dangerous path and nations became engaged in arms race, with a bitter competition in producing atomic bombs and finally stock piling of nuclear arsenals. A large portion of the nations' capital income was being appropriated for experimentation and production of atomic bombs and missiles, at the cost of poverty, sufferings from malnutrition, starvation and even death. This is the characterization of *Koli Kal*, as has been explained in the scriptures.

"Koli buli" is an excellent ideological satirical drama authored by the reputed dramatist Radha Raman Ghose, who clearly has a great knowledge of the history of human civilization and also has a vision for the future. Theater movement cannot move forward and serve its purpose if it is blindfolded from the course of our civilization, misleading the people in their understanding of current socio-economic/political issues, and hence failing to gear toward enlightenment and self-realization. Radha Raman Ghose was one of the few dramatists of our time who understood the true meaning of the theater movement and believed that theater could be used as a tool to mirror the flaws of the socio-economic and political structure of the modern world. "Koli buli" is a land-mark creation of this great author. It has been staged in Kolkata, and is highly acclaimed by the millions of drama-lovers there.

Our play Kolikaler Buli is an edited version of "Koli Buli". This play employs the "Epic Theater" feature of Brechtian drama style, and uses Brecht's "alienation effect". Epic Theatre is written as a seemingly disconnected, open-ended montage of scenes presented in a non-naturalistic, non-chronological way. The audience needs to arrive at its own conclusion of how the events are linked together. It presents a sequence of incidents or events that are presented without the restrictions of time, place or formal plot. The use of Brecht's "alienation effect", by applying anti-illusive techniques, reminds spectators that they are in a theatre watching an enactment of reality instead of reality itself. Brecht believed that theatre should appeal not to the spectator's feelings but to his reason. While still providing entertainment, it should be educative and capable of encouraging social change. Rather than the spectator identifying with the characters on stage and becoming emotionally involved with them, he preferred to persuade the audience to adopt a more critical attitude to what was happening on stage. The actors are required to exhibit an objective style of playing, to become in a sense detached observers. Brecht's technique of "historification," also used in Kolikaler Buli, comprises of projecting films and text on screens, forcing the audience to relate the action onstage to recent or other historical or social events.

Kolikaler Buli portrays the story of Hitlarian autocracy which appears time and again, and the sensible people who challenge the autocracy and fight back under the leadership of Lord Krishna, a symbolic character that is described in the Bhagavad Gita. This play sends a message to all dictators of the modern world that their days are numbered and the people under repression will no longer tolerate their autocratic rule. It signifies that the freedom of democracy is on the march with all the nations of the entire world waving their flags of democracy, and the bell of freedom is ringing.

Lord Krishna proclaimed himself the destroyer of evil and savior of mankind. He says to Arjuna, as narrated in the Bhagavad Gita, "Many lives here I passed through, as also have you. Many times I have been born, but I know all this, you do not know because you are an ordinary mortal under the spell of ignorance. I am a divine person; I know how many times I have been born." The famous *slokas* from the "Bhagavad Gita" manifests Lord Krishna's proclamations:

Yada yada hi dharmashya glanirbhabati bharata Abhyuthanam dharmashya todmatmanam srijamyaham Poritranayo sadhunang vinashayo cho dushkritam Dharma sangsthapanarthayo sambhawami yuge yuge

Whenever righteousness declines, and unrighteousness prevails, I body myself forth, assume human form and live as a human being. In order to destroy the evil and also protect the righteous, I incarnate Myself on this earth, time and again.

Remembering Habib Tanvir

Nandita Dasgupta

Any discussion about contemporary Indian theater cannot be complete without recalling the contributions of Habib Tanvir (1923 – 2009). He was an eminent Urdu and Hindi playwright and poet and above all, one of the greatest legends of Indian stage. His original name was Habib Ahmad Khan. In his early life, when he started writing poems, he took the pen name *Habib Tanvir*.

Although formally trained in the Western drama tradition in London and Bristol, he eventually returned to his very own *Chhattisgarhi* roots as early as in 1955 and since then experimented with the grassroot theatrical styles and common people for his repertoire in India. Around this time, Habib Tanvir founded Delhi's first professional theatre company, the *Hindustani Theatre*. In 1959 he set up the *Naya Theatre* Company in Bhopal. He was a pioneer in bringing folk and rural theater to the contemporary national stage creating an authentic "people's era" in the "theater of roots". His pro-people attitude must have emerged from his Leftist political ideology. Habib Tanvir was always an active protagonist of the Left-Wing cultural movement in India. Since his early youth, he was associated with the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and became an integral part of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) as an actor.

Tanvir was one of the very few directors who utilized everything including the stage itself, folk dances, physical acting and music. Even silences would become pregnant with the mystic nuances of his magical presentations. He used the talents of the rural and sometimes uneducated Chhattisgarhi people in his cast who spoke the dialogues in the *Chhattisgarhi* dialect that made the show all the more real, communicative and heartfelt. In this context he extensively experimented with *Pandavani*, a tradition folk and temple song ritual and the *Chhattisgarhi Naach* tradition in his plays - where his cast spoke the Chhattisgarhi dialect. His productions displayed a seamless blend of local idioms together with the new theatrical techniques that he had mastered through his exposures in Britain. He was successful in bringing to the cities indigenous theater forms, using motifs and ideas from the rural areas.

Habib had set new benchmarks to the Indian theater during his illustrious career. Some of his famous plays were *Agra Bazar* (1954) and *Charandas*

Chor (1975). Agra Bazar was based on the works and times of the plebian 18th-century Urdu poet of the decaying Mughal era, Nazir Akbarabadi, an older poet in the generation of Mirza Ghalib. This play was a reflection of Habib's pro-people outlook with a mixed cast of rural and urban actors for the first time in Indian theater. His seminal production, Charandas Chor was one of his iconic plays based on a Chhattisgarhi comic folk tale and was enacted in the local language involving seventy-two actors on stage. It immediately created a whole new idiom in modern Indian theater. Its highlight was *Naach* - a chorus that provided commentary through song. The embedded ethnicity in Charandas Chor won him the Fringe Firsts Award at Edinburgh International Drama Festival in 1982. This play was later adapted to a feature film by Shyam Benegal. It is very unfortunate that just within two months of his demise, Habib Tanvir's signature play, Charandas Chor has been banned in his own state Chhattisgarh, due to a controversy. It erupted because of the fact that one of the key characters (Guru Ghasidas) was cited as a dacoit prior to his ultimate spiritual upliftment.

Habib not only directed plays composed by him. He also laid his hands on works from all genres -- from the ancient Sanskrit works to European classics to the modern masters of India and beyond. Of course, the array of Chhattisgarhi folk tales which he extensively used was closest to his heart. Habib indigenized in 1958 the classical Sanskrit drama Mrichakatika to Mitti ki Gaari without tarnishing the spirit of the original form created by Shudraka. Mote Ram ka Satyagraha was a satire based on a story by Munshi Premchand and scripted by Safdar Hashmi and Tanvir. Habib's rendition of Asghar Wajahat's Jisne Lahore Nahin Dekha demonstrates his contribution to the strengthening of India's secular and progressive ideas. Kamdeo Ka Apna Basant Ritu Ka Sapna produced in 1993 was Tanvir's Hindi adaptation of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. His traditional Chhattisgarhi play on religious hypocrisy, Ponga Pandit turned out to be a controversy among some political parties in India in the 1990s. In 2002, he directed, Zahareeli Hawa, a translation of a play by the Canadian-Indian playwright Rahul Varma, based on the Bhopal gas tragedy. Raj Rakt was dramatized in 2006 based on two of Rabindranath Tagore's works -- Rajarshi and Visarjan. His other remarkable productions are Shatranj Ke Mohrey (1954), Lala Shoharat Rai (1954), Gaon ke naon Sasural, mor naon Damand (1973), Uttar Ram Charitra (1977) and Bahadur Kalarin (1978). Habib had also composed one play in English. It was in 1995 when he was invited to the USA by the Chicago Actors Ensemble.

Habib Tanvir did not limit himself to only stage acting. He was a versatile creative personality. Although famous as a doyen of the Indian theater, Habib had also acted in over nine feature films, including Richard Attenborough's film, *Gandhi* (1982) and *Bhopal Gas Tragedy*. His unique work with *Naya Theatre* brought him international reputation as one of the most innovative and outstanding creative figures in world theater. He had many prestigious feathers to his cap for his remarkable contribution to Indian art. For his remarkable achievements, he was awarded several national awards by the Indian government -- the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1969, Padma Shri in 1983 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1996 and then again in 2002. He was also nominated as the member of Rajya Sabha from 1972 through 1978. In 2006, the French government conferred upon him the Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters, the highest French honor for artistes.

Having led a full life for around eighty-five years, Habib Tanvir recently passed away on June 8, 2009. Through his creations, he would lead the audience towards some deep philosophical questions regarding humanity and social change that he could always convey in a simple, earthly style. It is a national loss however, that he has left his autobiography *Matmaili Chadariya* in Urdu, unfinished. We would love to hope and believe that the unfinished saga would be completed by some of his close associates so that we could have a glimpse of his illustrious life and creations. Those of us who were fortunate enough to experience some of his masterpiece renditions will cherish his contributions to the Indian theater with reverence and gratitude ever and always.

Is Drama Necessary?!

Samita Goswami

We are breathless as the curtain finally arises and the play begins. Our attention is held spellbound by the ensuing act. Unknowingly we take sides with characters of the drama as we become one with them. Their anger makes us bristle and their sadness touches a chord in our hearts. We always come out of the play a little bit wise and perhaps energized.

Behind a performance of any kind are hours of practice. The emotions evoked by the actors on stage come about through the complete orchestration of stage design, music, lighting, make-up, costumes, and most importantly of all: the endless hours of real human drama behind the scenes. Somehow through all of that, the group gels psychologically into a cohesive whole.

So why is it necessary? Why are we always drawn to real life or stage plays? What made the great writers of all time express themselves through plays? Perhaps it is because simple stories are one-dimensional but when they are set in motion to become dramas, the experience is three-dimensional.

Sometimes a drama sleeps within a story and the director hears its haunting tunes and he is drawn to set it free. Thus very unique plays from the mind of a reader which are not created by the original writer are born. Often times the director takes the liberty of changing certain parts of the story to create a theme which she believes tells a better story.

The greatest critic is always the audience. Some stories may have lost their charm over the years but the truly great dramas of all time still draw crowded halls. These dramas are ageless, season-less, touching every human being in a very deep and personal way. No matter where we come from, we have a deep yearning inside to evolve. This evolutionary impulse transcends our egotistic cry to look good as we search for our real face. Blame and trying to fit in with our little group loses its grip on us and we see light for the first time shining down upon us. This is our truth. Great playwrights are visionaries of our times. They awaken us and jolt us back into our forgotten selves.

We wake up as if from sleep walking and take responsibility for our own life. We take our power back. The non-dual qualities of love and transcended creativity are awakened again within us. Drama is Necessary!

Birendrakrishna Bhadra & Theater

Kamanashish Chakravorty

Most Bengalis remember Birendrakrishna Bhadra for his resonating voice reciting selected verses from the 'Chandi' and narrating the radio program, "Mahisasurmardini." The All India Radio (Akashvani) program broadcast annually in the early hours of an autumn morning has remained for decades the most popular among all of Birendrakrishna's radio presentations. Birendrakrishna died on November 3, 1991, at age 87, leaving his mark on Bengali theater, both on professional stage and radio, with many innovative and pioneering contributions.

Birendrakrishna was in his mid-twenties, when he joined AIR– Calcutta (now, Kolkata) in 1928. The station's program manager at the time, Nripendranath Majumdar, put Birendrakrishna in charge of the drama department. The officer was aware of Birendrakrishna's theatrical talents displayed in the stage-productions of Rabindranath's 'Baikunther Khata' and Paroshuram's 'Chikitsa Sankat'. He directed both plays before joining Akashvani. At the time, Akashvani used to relay the sound-track of some popular stage productions. The practice changed the following year, when Birendrakrishna directed, produced and acted on a radio drama written by Barrister Shrishchandra Basu. The June 4, 1929 airing of "Sandigdha" – the first drama produced solely for broadcast – was the forerunner of Akashvani's weekly feature of radio plays. The feature, considered 'modern' then, has been continuing ever since.

While working for Akashvani, Birendrakrishna directed and acted on numerous radio-plays, including the highly acclaimed presentations of Rabindranath's 'Chirakumar Sabha', D.L. Roy's 'Shahjaha' and Jyoti Bachaspati's 'Nibedita'. Most of the noted personalities of Kolkata's theater circle at the time, regularly participated in radio plays under Birendrakrsihna's direction.

He left Akashvani in 1937, but radio did not let him go. He continued with the yearly presentation of "Mahisasurmardini," until the program was recorded in the early 1970s for regular annual broadcasts.

Birendrakrishna appeared on professional theater in 1937, when he directed the play, 'Abhishek', for Rangmahal. Among his other notable productions were "Bidyapati', 'Madhumala' and two of Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's most famous dramas, 'Bindu' and 'Detective'. As an actor, his portraying of 'Chanakya' in the play, 'Chandragupta,' in the 1960s, still resonates in the minds of Bengali theater lovers.





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Best Wishes to Natyakrishti

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