

Theatre Festival

Inauguration of International Theatre Festival at Kala Vikas Kendra Auditorium, Cuttack on 01.10.2010

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to inaugurate International Theatre Festival being organized by Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh. This is my second coming to India Theatre Olympiad and this time it is for the inauguration of International Theatre Festival, a major attraction of India Theatre Olympiad. Cuttack, for last few days, has been in grip of football fever with top teams of the country vying for honour in prestigious Federation Cup and also that of high quality theatre. People of Cuttack City are always known for their love and appreciation for art and sports and they are now having a wonderful time witnessing high quality performances of performing art, theatre and football as well. India Theatre Olympiad has enlivened the city, first with very promising performances of our artists from different regions during just concluded National Song, Dance and Drama Competition and in the second phase the city now gets ready for theatre extravaganza of international taste. It is a pleasure to visit Cuttack during this period.

I am thankful to Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh for the invitation to grace this inaugural ceremony. The effort it has been taking to preserve, promote and popularize this lively form of performing art and also to promote new talents by providing them a platform to exhibit their skill and felicitate eminent cultural as well as theatre personalities from India and abroad is indeed highly commendable. As part of that noble doings, today I have great pleasure to present Konark Lifetime Achievement award to Smt. and Shri Mahenji, two eminent cultural personalities from Gujarat for their immense contribution to the field of art as a whole. I congratulate them and wish they will continue to uphold the rich artistic heritage of the country through their performances. I am also equally delighted to felicitate our guests, distinguished theatre personalities from Netherlands and Iran and congratulate them on making the art popular in their respective countries. India is always known for honouring and appreciating good art and artists. Such endeavour reflects that tradition.

I am given to understand that theatre groups from various foreign countries, from our neighbours to far off countries, are invited to this International Theatre Festival which is

part of the ongoing India Theatre Olympiad. It has emerged as one of the biggest theatre festival showcasing the artistic talent of India and world at large. It is also a laudable event of theatre to revive and restore the theatre culture. I am greatly impressed that the mission of this theatre festival is to promote creative theatrical expression and artistic enrichment to develop a sense of unity among various dramatic movements in the country and abroad and to forge forward national integrity, international amity and universal brotherhood through cross cultural synthesis and social assimilation. I understand, it is the 18th edition of India Theatre Olympiad and this event has become the centre of attraction for the artists both amateur and professional from all over the country and abroad to come over here and perform before a really theatre appreciating citizens of Cuttack city which is also known as Theatre City.

My dear friends from abroad, you have come to a state which is culturally the richest state in the country. Its rich cultural heritage is found in its exquisite art, craft and architecture. Those who have come here earlier must agree with me how the state with its pristine beauty has bewitched onlookers. But for the first timers it will surely be a wonderful opportunity to understand and explore the beauty of Orissa. Orissa's art and flourishing culture are the products of a long ancient civilization. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this beautiful state and I am sure you will be having your bags full with many sweet memories to share with your near and dear ones and that will make you come here again and again.

Orissa amidst all its beauty has a long tradition of theatre culture. I am proud that Orissa had thriving theatre activities during the reign of Emperor Kharavela. Of course, tradition continued and professional groups like Annapurna, Janata and Kalashree to name a few had carried forward the rich legacy and staged plays for months together before a sell out audience. This Cuttack City became the proud city and the only example of its kind in India with three professional pandals performing regularly. The state has many renowned dramatists like Kabichandra Kalicharan Patnaik, Bhanja Kishore Patnaik, Gopal Chhotray, Manoranjan Das, Biswajeet Das, Ratnakar Chaini, Kartik Chandra Rath, Rati Ranjan Mishra to name a few who excelled at different period. But with the fading away of

the golden era of theatre in Orissa, theatre had to pass through a very crucial period. However, few organizations like Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh have come forward with a commitment and dedication to work for the development of theatre and revive theatre culture. Their efforts have brought quality drama to the people by organizing such festivals of theatres and also encouraged the artists.

If we ask the established artists-- to what they give credit to their success, their reply comes instantly that their stint in the theatre that has given a solid foundation to their career. Theatre is special because it is here that the relationship between the stage and the audience is immediate. Artists do not have the liberty of retake and that brings perfection in playing the character much to the delight of audience. The feedback is live and permanent.

Music, dance and drama have always been assigned high place in the national and cultural life of India since ancient times. There is hardly a country where men and women do not express their emotions through music, dance and drama. Even with changes in the taste of man who now has other sources of entertainment like television, cinema, cable TV, Internet, theatre still survives and people still have their liking for theatre and get connected with theatre. I would like to congratulate theatre loving people of Cuttack City for coming to Theatre Olympiad and expressing their solidarity to the cause of theatre in particular and the art in general. Theatre can never die. It has come a long way from just as a media of mere entertainment to a means of education and development and at the same time it has evolved as an art to globalize theatre personnel from one corner to other corners in the world and it is seen through this kind of festival.

Theatre is a very powerful medium of projecting ideas. It creates excellent effect on the audience and conveys a good moral. It is the responsibility of the directors, playwrights, artists and all others involved in theatre to see that the platform of stage is used for the good of society. They all have to ensure that theatre fulfills its three main objectives namely education, entertainment and awareness. Besides this, theatre troupes need patronage to go to people in villages and arouse them with realistic presentation of life. When someone

sees a play that appears to be of his own or reflects the true picture of society then it will leave lasting impression and build a better society.

To make drama more effective and popularise and to produce actors and directors with necessary training background to take the legacy forward National School of Drama, Kendriya Sangeet Natak Akademi and State Sangeet Natak Academy have been striving a lot but more needs to be done. In this task, organizations like yours have to play a great role because the more we can enliven our lives with our own traditions and culture the more we can spread the message of peace and universal brotherhood in the world, which it urgently needs. With such effort of holding theatre festival, I am optimistic about the future of theatre. Let theatre regain its advantage as the most powerful live media for the benefit of the society and welfare of the whole mankind. I concluded by reiterating the words that I spoke on my last visit that theatre was there, theatre is there and theatre will be there. With these words, I have great pleasure to inaugurate this International Theatre Festival and wish the Festival and the endeavours of the organisers all success.

Jai Hind.