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The Blue Mug: Memories, Fine Acting & A Noble Cause

BY VEENA RAO

Atlanta, GA: Bollywood and theater actors Konkona Sen Sharma, Vinay Pathak, Ranvir Shorey, Rajat Kapoor, Sheeba Chadha and Munish Bharadwaj came together on stage at the Rialto on May 14th in a theatrical performance, The Blue Mug. Directed by Atul Kumar, the Blue Mug, an experimental, devised piece of theater, is on a tour of the US to benefit Operation Asha, an organization that is focused on the eradication of tuberculosis in India.

Devised theater is where the script comes, not from the writer, but from the group of performers themselves. In the case of Blue Mug, the script is partly a collection of loosely structured memories of four of the six performers. Vinay Pathak, Rajat Kapoor, Sheeba Chadha and Munish Bharadwaj go down the path of their personal memories, struggling to construct themselves on the basis of what they remember. They narrate childhood memories, adoles-

cent memories, dark memories, memories of joyous occasions- memories that reflect the social, political and cultural ethos of post-colonial India.

on stage. Ranvir Shorey was hilarious as the Punjabi patient with memory loss. Konkona did a decent job in her first theatrical performance, but one expected a



The other thread of the play is based on the book "The man who mistook his wife for a hat" by neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks, where a doctor (Konkona) evaluates the journey of her 40-year old patient (Ranvir Shorey) who suffers from immediate memory loss, but can remember his life up to his 20th birthday. The patient's journey from Punjab to Mumbai is depicted in a hilarious, yet poignant narration of his memories.

Experimental theater is not always enjoyable. The collection of memories did not culminate into a climax. There was no obvious message. But the actors brought the devised, improvised script so much to life that the Blue Mug struck a cord with the almost filled to the capacity audience. The production values were excellent. The lighting and the use of physical space by the actors were impressive.

While all six actors were performed effortlessly, Vinay Pathak stood out for his abundant energy and wit. He was obviously enjoying every bit of his time

more challenging role of the Bollywood star.

Dr. Shelly Batra, president of Operation Asha, in her address, exhorted the audience to be part of the organization's fight against TB in India. "TB is the child of poverty," she said. "It is one of the biggest causes of disruption of families, economic loss, and violation of human rights."

The irony, she said, is that TB is curable. Despite this, the number of TB related deaths in India are horrifying. Operation Asha has been treating the poorest of those affected, at minimum cost, by using the existing public infrastructure.

"I invite you to become a part of this movement," she said.

Atlanta promoter Mustafa Ajmeri said he was happy with the large turnout, and the support of the Atlanta public for a noble cause. Paddy Sharma was the master of ceremonies.

Sri Maha Lakshmi Koti Kumkumaarchana Begins At HTA

BY RAVI R. PONANGI



Atlanta, GA: Religious fervor and gaiety marked the beginning of the three month long Sri Maha Lakshmi Koti Kumkuma (vermillion) Archana that was held on Akshaya Tadiya, Sunday, May 16 at Hindu temple of Atlanta, Riverdale, as hundreds of devotees thronged the temple to witness the rituals.

Sponsors of the archana carried sanctified kalasams around the temple and placed them in front of Maha Lakshmi. The day's program started on Akshaya Tadiya with Nava kalasa snapanam and alamkara tirumanjanam (abhishekam). Then Koti Kumkumaarchana Maha Sankalpam was given to devotees by the priests. After taking the kalasams and utsava murtis of Lord Vishnu and Sri Maha Lakshmi in a colorful procession around the temple about 300 hundred devotees individually performed Lakshmi Sahasranama and Ashta Lakshmi puja. For many it was a sentiment to worship Goddess Lakshmi to bring in prosperity.

The Three month long Kumkumaarchana will conclude with the three day Ashta Lakshmi Yagam in Sravana masam from August 20-22. Giving the details, Dr. Hyma Mikkilineni informed that they have contemplated to perform this great worship for the past several years. Keeping in view of the significance of the worship and the aspirations of devotees, the temple board decided to perform the worship this year. This is the first time Sri Maha Lakshmi Koti Kumkumaarchana is being performed in the southeast part of USA. Ten years ago, the Pittsburg temple performed the worship.

Dr. Mikkilineni said, the celebration is once in a life time opportunity. "Do not miss this opportunity to worship the Goddess of wealth. It will be a feast to our eyes,"

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