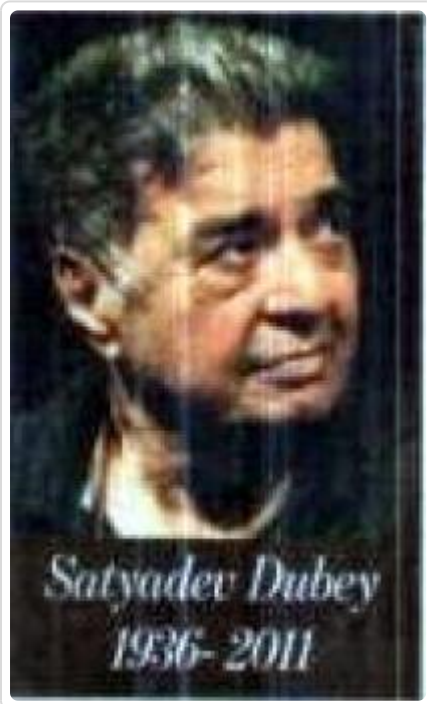


PANDIT SATYADEV DUBEY - R I P



REMINISCENCES OF A MAVERICK THEATRE LEGEND PANDIT SATYADEV DUBEY BY HIS FAN

Till 1965-66, I used to be only a film critic but after watching the plays of Theatre Unit and IPTA, I also not only developed a taste for the Theatre but also became a Drama critic. Thanks to stalwarts like R M Singh, Nitin Sethi, M S Sathyu from IPTA and Pandit Satyadev Dubey. He pioneered the modern Hindi theatre movement by joining the Theatre Unit, the theatre group cum school founded by the legendary Ebrahim Alkazi, who later joined the National School of Drama (NSD) as the head and left the charge of Theatre unit in the hands of Pt. Dubey.

I still remember the days when on the dimly lit terrace of a bldg. at Warden Road, he used to stage plays free for enthusiasts. Later on, when the foundation for theatre love was laid, Pt. Dubey's Theatre Unit used to stage his revolutionary thought provoking plays at the only popular mid town theatre 'Tajpal Hall' selected from a wide range of literature. I recall, I almost saw all his plays. 'Aadhe Adhure?', 'Pagala Ghoda?', 'Sari Raat', 'Evam Indrajeet?', 'Yayati?', 'Hayavadana?', 'Gidhade?', 'Shantata Court Chaly Ahe', 'Andha Yug' etc. There I came across the great talented actors Dina Pathak, Amrish Puri, Amol Palekar, Sunil Bhanbhag, Sulbha Deshpande, Nilu Phule and hosts of others. All these plays were trail blazing under his direction and actor grooming prowess. His own writing of the bold play 'Sambhog Se Sanyas Tak' was perhaps a mini 'revolution in starting an era of 'liberated theatre' which also introduced today's many acclaimed film actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak and others. Needless to add that he was one of the writer pillars of the then 'New Wave Films' like 'Ankur', 'Bhumika?', 'Nishant?', 'Aakrosh?', 'Kalyug', 'Junoon' etc. besides himself being an accomplished actor and director. Although, he won many awards and laurels, he was never swayed by them and kept his devotion intact to his first and last love theatre.

I recall only three brief encounters with him. First time, may be in 70s, we first informally met in a film party. I joined the table where he was sitting and introduced myself as his fan. With my limited knowledge, I dare not discuss about the merits of his dramas. However, during the chat, I just mentioned that I had also met and seen the 'histrionic' performance delivery of his Guru Alkazi and the great training of NSD. He immediately corrected me that although Alkazi was his senior, he was not a student of NSD. Alkazi and he were just colleagues and partners in 'Theatre Unit'. During his NSD days, he frequently used to visit NSD but as a 'Teacher and Advisor'.

Second encounter was again in a film party during 80s. I told him "Panditji, I now know something about your childhood at your native place Bilaspur (Then a part of Madhya Pradesh and now of Chattisgarh). 'How you know that, Mohan?' (Although myself and Panditji share the same birth year, as respect I used to call him Panditji and not by name, and he by my first name). I said 'Your school classmate Moolchand Khandelwal is now the father in law of my nephew. When he came to know that I am in Mumbai and also an art critic, he asked me 'Do you know 'Satya' who is now a big name in Mumbai art circle? When I asked 'Satya' who, then he told your full name and said many things about your friendship'.

Panditji expressed joy: 'Oh, so you know 'Moolu' (Moolchand), Arre bhai, how is he? It's long that we met. Next time when you meet him do not forget my mention'.

Our last encounter was at Prithvi Theatre in 90s where he was staging one of his plays. (I do not recall the name now). In Prithvi, there was, and still is a rule that late comers to the play are denied entry. Panditji was a stickler to the rules of discipline. He himself used to remain present at the entry gate for few minutes after the start. Puffing heavily, I just wanted to rush inside. At entry point I saw Panditji standing. He accosted me 'Arre, Mohan you have come? But sorry, Tum paanch minute deri se aaye ho? 'Panditji, Kya karta, Kambakht traffic jam tha isliye deri se pahuncha hun? He blurted, 'You are also citing a standard Bambaiba bahana?'. In desperation, I asked "To kya maii wapas jawoon??"

Panditji patted me on shoulder 'Nahi re, phouwan peeche ke Darvaaze se entry maro, hall mein jagah hai.' I was indeed overwhelmed by his 'Apnapan'.

Last was this year (2011) only when I phoned him to congratulate on getting the National Honour of Padma Bhushan. His reaction as almost cold. 'Forget yaar, itne varshon baad kumbhkarn sarkar neend se jaagi hai? And just in one sentence he said it all.

Panditji. We all lovers of art will miss you badly. **R I P**

Category:

Nostalgia

COMMENTS

Very touching reminices/memorabilia ineed covering certain new aspects of this legendary theatre teacher. Madan Bham
madan bham

Thank you Mohan jee. I shared a room with him at Marina Guest House in Bandra, when I first came to Mumbai. Regards,
Avtar Bhogal
Avatar Bhogal

Very well written, sir. Rajeshkumar Singh
Rajeshkumar Singh

mohan ji thanks for such a nice piece on Dubey ji
pradeep gupta

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