

Endless saga of incest, skewed relationships

The play about the journey of a man called Dhanraj is based in a world full of power play, ego, desires and greed

Just by incorporating a few videos one can maybe add layers to a performance but can't justify it as 'physical theatre'. When the viewer reads the brochure mentioning 'Physical Theatre', one naturally expects to see action

and more use of body language. But the actors of the recently staged play *Dhanraj* didn't seem to be doing that, and consequently their gestures qualified as mere gimmicks.

In the Amphitheatre of India Habitat Centre, the play written and directed by Pranav Brara and Heemanshu Sharma was presented as part of The Contemporary Arts Week 2014. The show commenced without much ado or announcement, impressing the audience which was probably expecting something different. However, the opening scene where Dhanraj (Pranav Brara) is talking over the phone is an indication that the performance will be marred by bad lighting arrangements and unfavourable response of the audience, which is unable to clearly discern the proceed-



UNUSUAL Scenes (above and left) from the play *Dhanraj*.

ings on the stage.

Nevertheless, the play progresses and the tale of a man who lives by doing bad, unfolds. The protagonist is convincing in putting together his act of being a man who sets a trap for his own soul and repents after having committed immoral deeds. Soon there is the entry of a Mannequin (enacted brilliantly by Heemanshu Sharma), which the protagonist purchases from a showroom and misuses to fulfil his uncontrollable desires. There is also the presence of Dhanraj's love from school life, a prostitute who abuses him and a girl who he takes advantage of.

Though the play moves

seamlessly, there are many loose ends which if taken care of could have made the performance more forceful. However, the writer-director duo employs the inclusion of incest unusually well. Instead of the father, it is the mother who is in the spotlight. The mother's abuse explains why Dhanraj is in such a state today.

Dhanraj's relationship with the Mannequin presents layers of our relationships where we treat the 'other' with disregard till the time we learn to value their presence in our lives, the hard way. To Dhanraj, the Mannequin remains to be somebody who will never disagree with him. The latter finally makes its place in the

protagonist's heart underscoring the importance of patience in our respective lives.

While one thinks that the narrative should have been long over, there are videos of different actors that continued to be screened, stretching the act endlessly. All the videos have one thing in common - a sack. Without saying anything, these actors - a rap-picker, a mother and Dhanraj himself struggle to bear the weight of this sack. It is, however, only the mother who picks it up and still smiles. But the whole act symbolises how all of us carry the burden of our own doings till death does the two actors apart.

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