

Festival of Ramkatha - 12th - 15th March, 2008

Kumaoni Ramlila by Parvatiya Kala Kendra

12th March 2008, Wednesday at 7:00PM

Vanue: Open Air Theatre, No. 3, Dr. R. P. Road, IGNC, New Delhi - 110 001



Kumaoni Ramlila

It is said that the Kumaoni Ram lila Performance is probably the 'Longest Opera in the World' This tradition has developed and nurtured for several hundred years and has been sustained by the community as a regular annual festive activity, at the grass root level. There are several unique aspects of this form of Ramlila. The first is the fact that the Chaupais and Dohas are not rendered in the Kumaoni dialect. The dialect used range from Braj to Khari Boli, Hindi and Urdu though the Ramcharitmanas forms the base of the presentation, songs in Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani have added to the original verses.

Second unique aspect is the rendering of the story. The performance is 'Operatic', which is based on the couplets being sung and not spoken. All the characters develop the story through a plethora of songs sung in all kinds of musical forms ranging from Thumri, Dadra, Bhajan, Ghazal, Chhand and Quawalli, which are based on a variety of classical ragas like Jogiya, Khamaj, Bihagara, Piloo, Sohni, Bhatiyaar, Jaijivanti, Kafi, Puriya, Hameer & Bhairavi. Surprisingly no indigenous folk tunes are used. The taal

arrangements are usually Dadra, Kaharva, Roopak, Teentaal and Deepchandi.

The form has copiously drawn upon the rich musical repertoire of North Indian traditional theatre like Nautanki, Maach, Jatra and Raas. The 'sung dialogues' have their own distinct flavour and each of them is based on a raga. This necessitates the fact that the performer has to be equally proficient in both singing and acting.

Vanvaas- Sita Haran- Performance on the 12th of March 2008

This portion of Ramlila is perhaps one of the most dramatic and visually exciting pieces. This marks the turning point in the storyline of Ramlila and is replete with various aspects of theatrical depiction' including the main conflict. It begins with Ram, Laxman and Sita leaving Ayodhya. The subsequent sequences feature their meeting with Khewat the boatman who takes them across river Ganga, and his refusal to accept any payment with a couplet- "I am a simple boatman taking passengers across Ganga, whereas you take everyone across the 'Bhav Sagar'. Shurpnakha's encounter with Ram , Laxman and Sita feature a number of rich and powerful musical compositions. 'Khar- Dushan Baraat' as a lavish theatrical spectacle, is a portion which even today draws a sizeable audience. The revelation of Ram as an Avtaar comes to Ravan after Khar and Dushan are killed in the battle. The famous lines from Ramcharitmanas which sets the stage for Sita Haran, are sung by Ravan here:

Khar Dushan mohi sam balwanta, tinahi ko marayi binu bhagwanta!
To main jayi bairu hathi karaon,
Prabhu sar pran taje bhav taraon!