

First time since 2009, Academy holds drama festival in Kashmir

Nine Kashmiri plays being staged in as many days

Srinagar, June 3, 2013

For the first time since 2009, the annual Drama Festival organized by J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages took off here Monday evening with theatre lovers hailing the revival of the important cultural activity in the Valley. In all, nine Kashmiri plays will be staged in as many days at the Government College for Women, M. A. Road auditorium.

The festival began with the play '*Rath Vandai Malinyo*' presented by Kalidas Theatre Group. The play written by prominent theatre person and playwright, Makhan Lal Saraf, was directed by Ayash Aarif. A large audience including theatre persons watched the play and appreciated the performers.



Declaring the festival open, Secretary J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, Khalid Bashir Ahmad said that the Academy was committed to the promotion of theatre in the State and the current festival was a significant step towards this direction. He said in March 2013, a drama festival was held at Jammu which was appreciated by the audience and theatre lovers in general. So far as Kashmir was concerned, he said, this annual activity remained disrupted for some years and it was his priority to revive the activity in the summer capital. He said although there was no restriction of language for the festival the fact that all the plays being staged are written in Kashmiri augurs well for the local language.

Describing the Academy as the premier institution to promote and propagate theatre in the State, the Secretary said that to achieve this objective financial assistance is given to theatre groups to encourage

theatre activity, besides holding drama festivals and awarding the best talent in production, set, costume, music, direction and acting and holding of playwright completion and theatre workshops. He said some of these activities had suffered interruption especially in Kashmir but with the revival of the drama festival here the periodic activities will be revived. He said the Playwright Competition and Theatre Workshop will also be held shortly.



Khalid said that Kashmir has a very old tradition of theatre about which references are available in our ancient texts. The 6th-7th century text, *Neelmat Purana*, talks about religious festivals, social occasions, agricultural festivals and first snowfall of the winter when besides music and dance, drama activities were carried out in ancient Kashmir. Historically 4th to 7th century AD is considered to be the golden period of Kashmir's art forms including drama. The theatre in Kashmir, he said, had seen both its periods of glory and decline but at no point in time has it altogether disappeared from the cultural scene. The oldest folk theatre of Kashmir known as *Bhand Paether* has survived the vicissitudes of time and is enjoying the same popularity even today. He recalled that apart from the current 9-day long drama festival, two month long folk festival, organized by the Academy, is going on at different tourist places of Kashmir, depicting the rich folk traditions of the Valley including *Bhand Paether*.

Other plays to be staged during the festival include *Pagah Sholi Donyah (June 4)*, *Secret Plan (June 5)*, *Musafir (June 7)*, *Na Maloom (June 8)*, *Yeli Shaam Gatchhi (June 9)*, *Nyay (June 10)*, *Phir Thur (June 11)* and *Shinakhti Card (June 12)*. There will be no play on June 6.
