

Redeeming Kaikeyi **ON STAGE**

*THE SPIAN RAJOO BAROT'S
NEXT PRODUCTION KAIKEYI
PROVIDES A FRESH TAKE ON
THE YOUNGEST QUEEN OF
KING DASHRATH*



Vaibhavi Bhatt

Vrunda R Bhatt

Unless one has very sharp insights, it is rather difficult to decipher the roles of characters in our scriptures. It's been the same with Kaikeyi, the youngest queen of king Dashrath, Lord Rama's father, and the mother of Bharat.

Her popular image is of a jealous woman swayed by whisperings of Manthara, her maidservant. And she contrives to send Lord Rama to exile to put her son on the throne of Ayodhya.

The realistic interpretations of Kaikeyi's actions, however, can be as far from that image as possible. But to find that truth, one has to be ready to dig deep, like veteran theatre director Rajoo Barot is set to do in his next stage production - Kaikeyi.

For Barot, Kaikeyi is one of the greatest women strategists India's ever had, and the Ramayana can be seen not as a battle between Rama and Ravana, but a war of strategies between Kaikeyi and Malyavan (Ravana's uncle).

"I wasn't really on keen on doing a mythological play; but I got a strong recommendation to read the novel on 'Kaikeyi' penned by Daulat Bhatt" said Barot, which, he claims opened his mind to a different

Kaikeyi, who's been misunderstood

through the ages.

"Do you think a woman is capable enough to win the war, will be so gullible to get carried away by a servant's (Manthara) tale?" questions Barot.

Kaikeyi will be Barot's next production after 'Kasuk bhali gayelo manas' based on Socrates which premiered in September last year. While Socrates had around 52 artistes on stage, Kaikeyi will have around 12 artistes.

"I had to rework a lot on my language and pronunciations as the subject demanded so" said Vaibhavi Bhatt who'll be portraying Kaikeyi's character.

The play will be interwoven with the narration of Ghanshyam Gadhavi, whom we have earlier seen narrating theatrical production Kadak Badshaahi.

While Socrates had won accolades for its costumes, this time too, Barot has teamed up with NSD pass out Arpita Dhagat for Kaikeyi. "Barot sir asked me to keep the elegance intact but he didn't want it to be too glittery. As it deals with pre-vedic period, I had very little references to do research on," said Dhagat.



Rajoo Barot