

# Shakespeare with a twist

**THEATRE** Hilley-ley is back this year with a desi spin on “The Merchant of Venice”

The courts of Venice will be replaced with the classrooms of Delhi in *Saudagari*, a Hindi adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. Set in contemporary India, *Saudagari* poses poignant questions on the survival of love and friendship in a sphere where caste and gender prevail.

The play is part of Kutumb Foundation’s Hilley-ley festival, now in its sixth year. Kutumb works with children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds using fun-based experiential learning methods like theatre in its after-school programmes, says its president Kapil Pandey.

The play stars almost 30 actors aged 7 to 18 from the slums and the tenements of Pandara

of Nizamuddin and Shahjahan roads. It has been written and directed by Mohit and Sumit — two schoolboys who are now peer leaders in Kutumb’s programmes. They are guided by playwright Manjima Chatterjee, Kutumb’s general secretary.

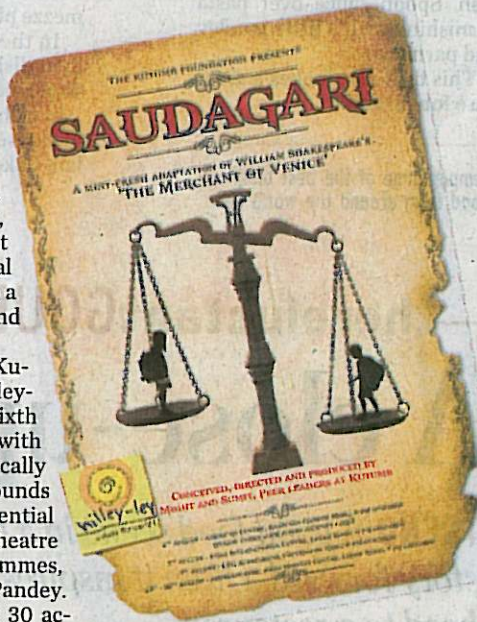
Both boys, who study at Government Boys Senior Secondary School on Pandara Road, have at least half a decade of training and experience in theatre.

*Saudagari* is a radical adaptation of Shakespeare’s classic. Set in a college, it presents the conflict between students of different castes. Issues of reservation, love and women’s liberation are presented as a two-hour musical.

Most of the participants in Kutumb’s programmes go to schools where teachers play truant. Even the studious children, said Kapil, lack social skills though they do well in studies. The aim of the play and Kutumb’s involvement in theatre, said Kapil, “...is to make people less averse to asking questions.”

Kutumb’s folk fusion band Manchale will also perform at the festival.

Through its annual festival Hilley-ley Kutumb attracts volunteers and publicises its work. In fact, it needs volunteers and sponsors for the festival. For details call Kapil at 9810757852 or Manjima at 9810738157 or Austin at 9718644676 or Nandini at 9953406224.



## SCHEDULE

There are five screenings of *Saudagari* (entry free)

**August 4**

6 p.m., American Centre, Kasturba Gandhi Marg (Identity cards required)

**August 5**

6 p.m., Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre

**August 7**

6 p.m., LTG auditorium, Copernicus Marg

August 24 and 25

6 p.m., Amphitheatre, India Habitat Centre

