KANTA DAB DAB AT KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY

- Nischal Prajapati

Very rarely do performances by outsiders happen at Kathmandu University. So any time a non-KU performer comes to KU, it is a small achievement in itself, says Nischal Khadka, President of Kathmandu University Society of Music and Culture (KUSMC), whose club recently organized a performance by Kanta dAb dAb on 27 April, Wednesday.

This year, 2016, is the 25th anniversary year of Kathmandu University. To mark this milestone for the university, many different events are scheduled throughout the year. Performance by Kanta dAb dAb in the C. V. Raman Auditorium was one of the many celebratory events, but more than that, it was also an attempt to promote music of genres that are less mainstream while also allowing KU denizens to enjoy them without having to go into the city.

Kanta dAb dAb is a sitar, bass and percussions trio, with Sunit Kansakar on the sitar, Rizu Tuladhar playing the bass and Nikhil Tuladhar on the drums. Their music is a blend of Eastern soul and Western grooves. The band’s name comes from a character in Newari character called ‘kanta dab dab’.

The programme was officially inaugurated by Professor Dr. Bhola Thapa, Registrar of Kathmandu University. Opening for Kanta dAb dAb was a performance by members of KUSMC – Pratik Satyal, Sagun Kayastha and Nischal Khadka. Kanta dAb dAb performed from a set list that included songs like Escapade, Kelikula and Dab Dab. Followed by the performance, after a short break, Kanta dAb dAb held a short workshop for 20 participants. They talked about their music-making process; about their thought processes when they make a new tune. They also shared about how they arrange their music so the sound from the three different instruments meld into making a coherent and beautiful tune.

To see them perform, the 200-seat capacity Auditorium was completely full. What Kanta dAb dAb has brought to the music scene is something wholly original and to experience that, students, and teachers alike, were more than eager. Every song ended with an uproarious clapping by the audience. Despite the occasional technical difficulties (“This is, after all, Nepal,” quipped Rizu Tuladhar after one such difficulty), they had no difficulty in bringing the house down.

At first, one would think that sitar would go as well with bass and drums as water with oil. Seeing Kanta dAb dAb play their musical magic would dispel any such doubts. Music is a universal language. You can pick any instrument of your choosing and use it to tell your story. In recent days traditional and classical instruments have been eschewed because, maybe, people believe they can’t tell their story in these modern times. But Kanta dAb dAb has proven that any instrument can speak for you and tell your story with their fusion music of Eastern sensibilities and Western modernity.