

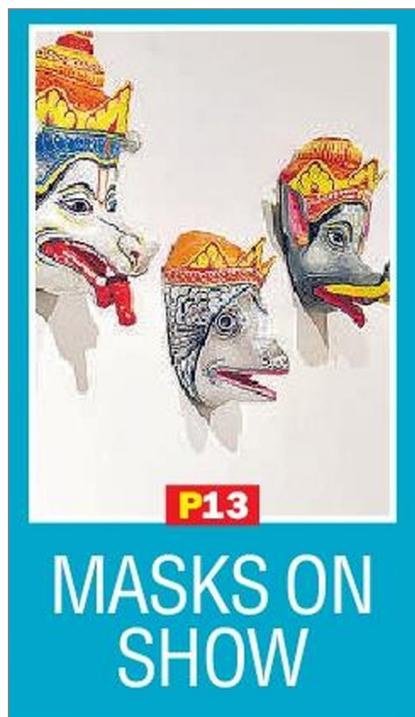
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A unique exhibition of about 150 masks from the personal collection of Lieutenant General Anil Chauhan, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command and his wife Anupama, was on viewing for the public for the first time as a part of Mukhota — The World of Masks at the Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) for a week. Collected from across the world, including remote areas that are inaccessible for most of us like the interiors of the African and Himalayan belts, each mask carries a story of culture and tradition. Incidentally, t2 had gotten an exclusive peek at his collection last year.

“Collecting masks have been a passion for over 20-30 years. Till now, only the people who have called on us have got to see some of the masks because they are on display in our drawing room. It’s only after coming to Calcutta and meeting people that motivated me to put my masks on display. I thought it was a good idea because why should only the few army officers who come home get to see my masks? It should be open to more. And the kind of interest the masks have generated is amazing because I thought this was just my interest,” said General Chauhan. His wife Anupama and daughter Pragya take equal enthusiasm in the maintenance and upkeep of General Chauhan’s vast collection of masks and were both present at KCC for the inauguration on April 11. “I’m very excited to see these masks reach a greater audience. The fact that the exhibition has garnered so much interest is remarkable,” said Pragya, who is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in architecture.

The ceremony itself was a socially-distanced one with antiquity-loving guests in their masks as they were

A MASK EXHIBITION OF A DIFFERENT KIND



Glimpses from the exhibition



Lieutenant General Anil Chauhan, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command flanked by wife Anupama and daughter Pragya



Aditya and Richa Agarwal

welcomed by a ritualistic dance and music performance by 12 monks from Kalimpong’s Rumtek Monastery that follows the Gelug school of Buddhism. This was followed by General Chauhan introducing the guests to his world of masks as he gave a brief overview of his collection with the help of a presentation. From his collection of over 200 masks, General Chauhan’s earliest ones were from Nepal while there were

many from places like Angola, Nagaland and even Bengal. Some were made of clay and coconut shell while there were many made of metal or carved out of wood and a unique one that reportedly had calcified remains of animal bone. “Organised under KCC Hub, this exhibition brings a special significance to our commitment to promote the crafts and the people behind them by presenting this major exhibition of masks before

such an august audience. From the extensive collections of Anupama and Anilji, the present selection of over 150 masks not only represents the artistry and finesse of this craft, but also brings to the foreground different cultural expressions from across the globe, and we are only too happy to be able to host and curate it for you all,” said Richa Agarwal, chairperson, KCC. The exhibition was curated by KCC director

Reena Dewan. While masks have now become a quintessential part of our life, it’s the kind that General Chauhan treasures that we undoubtedly like exponentially more. Some serve as souvenirs of some his memorable escapades of an illustrious career in the army while some are reminders of cultures far from what is native to us.

Anannya Sarkar
 Pictures: B. Halder