

# Clowning around for a purpose

## Theatre group spreads family planning message through street plays

**MANISHA SHARMA  
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**R**AM LUBHAIYA was doing his daily chores in Bilwa village, 27 km from Jaipur at around 10 am on Friday morning when suddenly two clowns appeared and started imitating people.

Lubhaiya was definitely amused. But he also wondered why the clowns had appeared. Like him, several others were staring at the spectacle with interest. The clowns were talking with everyone in the village and passing on a message

They are talking about Sukhia who does not a son to carry his family's name forward and to perform his last rites.

They call Sukhia and one of them says, "You must have a son." Sukhia replies in a very satisfied voice that he has two daughters and they are enough for him. He says that his wife cannot bear the strain of bearing more children. He tells them that she too is reconciled to the fact that they have only two daughters.

The villagers make fun of Sukhia saying that their wives have seven

tions. Whether the play's end was right? If Sukhia's decision was wrong, what should he have done? The oppressed character asked for solutions to the problem. Many spectators offered them.

Several men said that there was no harm in having more children. They said that a son is very important in a family.

But only a few men said that two children are enough for any family whether girls or boys. The women were unanimously of the opinion that two children were enough for a family. In a move aimed at



**Bilwa women enjoy a laugh with Karwaan artists on Friday**

PHOTO: SUMAN SARKAR

to them. The people were by now quite interested in what was going on.

The two clowns are artists from *Karwaan*, a street theatre group of Jan Kala Sahitya Manch. They were inviting people to come to the camp organised by Population Services International, for the free distribution of medicines and contraceptives.

After distributing medicines and contraceptives, the group gathered the people and performed a street play based on the theme of family planning. The plot of the play is quite simple — Four people are working in the fields of a village.

or eight children and are still physically fit and can give birth to more children.

The villagers tease Sukhia saying that he is a slave to his wife. Sukhia seems a little upset. But when the other people of the village too start forcing him to have a son, he gets convinced and forces his wife to have more children.

His wife opposes his stand and tries to dissuade him, giving many reasons and explanations to all of them. But in the end, she has to accept his decision and have more children.

When the performance was over, the audience were asked ques-

increasing the audience interaction, volunteers were invited to act out what Sukhia should have done.

One villager volunteered and acted out the role of the oppressed character and convinced the other people.

This theatre group always expresses the voice of the oppressed by using the technique 'Theatre of Oppressed,' in which, they make people interact in any social problem.

This form has been made a platform for the audience to understand the problem of population explosion. ♦