



NATYA SHODH SANSTHAN

**Synopsis of Proceedings of Seminar**  
**Plays in a National Perspective**  
**Round Table I**

ORGANISED BY  
**NATYA SHODH SANSTHAN**

**28<sup>th</sup>. November – 30<sup>th</sup>. November 1996**

## **Synopsis of Proceedings of Seminar**

### **Plays in a National Perspective**

#### **Round Table I**

*In November 1996 Natya Shodh Sansthan organized a round table Discussion around some plays of Badal Sircar as part of a much bigger project of creating a dialogue between playwrights and practitioners around processes related to some significant plays that had been shortlisted by the Sansthan. The session was introduced and conducted by Samik Bandyopadhyay. The session was attended by Badal Sircar and Directors like B. V. Karanth, Shyamanand Jalan, Satyadev Dubey and Rajindarnath among others. Excerpts from a synoptic report of discussions on 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November are presented here.*

**28<sup>th</sup>. Nov, 1996, Session 1**

**Plays discussed: Ebong Indrajit and Baki Itihas**

**By Badal Sircar**

**Participants: B.V. Karanth, Satyadev Dubey, Badal Sircar, Gobindo Ganguly, Shyamanand Jalan, Jayati Bose, Kumar Roy, Jabbar Patel and Samik Bandyopadhyay, the moderator.**



After the welcome address by Pratibha Agrawal, Director, Natya Shodh Sansthan, Samik Bandyopadhyay in his introductory address said that when the Seminar-project “Plays in a National Perspective” was taken up by Natya Shodh Sansthan, he and his colleagues had realized that around the 70s i.e. immediately after the first phase which came in the 60s., there was a resurgence of an ‘Indian Theatre’, of a new Indian Theatre trying to address itself to the problems of a post-independence sensibility shaping itself or defining itself.

Around the early mid-seventies, the whole strange concept of an ‘*Indian Theatre*’, looking for an Indian Theatre and strange ideas started being aired all the time. These ideas were being imposed on their minds and on their theatre activity. Since the theatre movement and the theatre activity had reached a critical/problematic situation, theoreticians, academics and even bureaucrats barged in to define ‘*Indian Theatre*’. He further explained that fortunately these ideas did not last and while they were working at the *Natya Shodh Sansthan* they noticed that there were lot of plays – Indian and foreign, old and new, classical and very modern – which happened to emerge

and re-emerge again and again in different parts of the country and were worked upon by different directors, with different meanings, angles and perspectives to have new meanings come in. Then came the idea of making an exploration of these particular plays. Samik said that they believed that nothing can happen out of emptiness and this thought urged them to have a look at the text, for these texts must have something in them, otherwise why should different people in different contexts go back to these texts and work on them? These texts have that potency and value within them to offer the challenge.

Deciding to have a look at the texts, Samik explained that they wanted the playwrights and the directors to have a dialogue between them. They decided to begin with the directors first to give them their reactions to the text, that is what they found in the text, their notions and how their visions of theatre came to work with the texts.

As far as the playwrights were concerned, they wanted the playwrights to look back in retrospect and share with them what they thought to bring into the plays and what happened in the consequent history of the plays because the plays do not remain the same once they are staged. They become part of the public domain in a way.

Samik added that their research centered on the thought “what happens in the process...how the playwright feels and I think it is also important for a playwright to feel that the directors who have used his materials have done wonderful things with his material and therefore he feels provoked, inspired, incited to do more work or even try to write new plays where he would like to bring in things which have not been tackled...but these are visions that he would have liked to be communicated and they have not gone over or gone across.”

Explaining the pattern and the format of the seminar, Samik explained that they could (a) explore the value/worth/relevance or the meaning of the texts in terms of the text as it was made and the text as it grew in the productional/theatrical process and (b) open up a kind of dialogue between the playwrights and the directors which could go forward – just beyond the archival reconnaissance, could go over to further creative interaction. He said that based on their studies at a statistical level, Natya Shodh Sansthan has drawn up a list of about a hundred plays which have been done widely in post-independent India and which cover a very wide range. He further explained that for the first year, as part of the project they have decided to take up 25 plays. For the particular three day seminar they would be considering about 15 or 16 of these and would be making a close study of the plays before making over to other plays. They hoped to go on with the exercise in the next few years and complete the project within 5 or 6 years. After completion of the project they may be able to find some of the concerns – theatrical and ideological or emotional they may give them the impression of what the Indian Theatre experience is all about and rather than call it Indian theatre and label it in any way.

Samik said that during the course of the seminar, they would look forward to the opening up of certain issues and areas that might need further study and research. This would help them to have a close look at the productions, make them assemble all the details – photographs, directors’ notes, reviews etc. so that there is a thorough documentation at Natya Shodh Sansthan. He said: “If somebody wants to study the history of *Ebong Indrajit* or *Baki Itihas* or *Tringsha Shatabdi* or *Ghashiram Kotwal*, there would be enough documentation here (at Sansthan) photographically and textually to study. In a way we are leading on to a kind of history...making history out of this material.”

Concluding his introductory remarks Samik Bandyopadhyay said that the seminar will begin with Badal Sircar and two of his plays *Ebong Indrajit* and *Baki Itihas* which have historically opened up a very important area. He added that he has heard from Satyadev Dubey and from B. V. Karanth on different occasions how *Ebong Indrajit* at a particular point of time meant something very important and serious in the activity in which they were involved. Samik referred to an “excellent” introduction Dubey wrote to the first English publication of Badal Sircar’s *Ebong Indrajit* in Girish Karnad’s translation. He said that he happened to be part of it since he was working for the Oxford University Press, and that he had to chase Dubey to get the piece of writing, which according to him was an emotional and critical piece at the same time, a kind of writing that has become ‘rare’ over the years.



Samik then requested B.V. Karanth and Satyadev Dubey to share with them their experience of discovering *Ebong Indrajit*. He wished to know from them whether in retrospect the play has anything to do still with their theatre work or whether it has served a purpose to a certain point and how they have had to go beyond it. Referring to Badal Sircar who was present in the seminar, Samik said that Badal Babu is open to criticism and welcomed it and he can listen to the discussion and criticisms and respond to it, if necessary.

The first session, devoted to Badal Sircar's *Ebong Indrajit* and *Baki Itihas*, started with B. V. Karanth, recalling how he found it surprising "that though this play was reputed to be of an intellectual kind and we were told that people would not understand the play, I found for myself that people in such small places as Udupi, Sagar, Davangere, Chitradurg, understood the play...What enthralled the audience most was when a few actors shouting rushed to the stage from amidst the audience. None of them had ever seen a play like that." 'For a later production at the NSD, as an experiment and exercise for the students,' in a version written by Pundit Balraj, who also wrote some very good poem '(it was not a musical play, it was a lyrical play)' for it, Karanth was more experimental: "For me Indrajit is an individual character with a distinctive identity. All the other characters are routine and unimpressive – they are merely numbers. Indrajit is not one of them. He is different. So in my production sometimes Amal becomes Indrajit, sometimes Vimal becomes Indrajit, sometimes Nirmal appears as yet another character." In other words, Karanth saw the possibility of an Indrajit implicit in every character. Two other productions of the same play made by Karanth – one for Darpan, Lucknow and a revival in Kannada – failed. The play itself was recognized in Kannada literary circles unanimously as a very good play. Karanth even today feels a strong bond between *Ebong Indrajit* and himself – 'I gained recognition in Karnataka due to the production of *Ebong Indrajit*."

Speaking after Karanth, Satyadev Dubey took the position: "I've come here because it gives me an opportunity of re-examining my life. I'm not interested in Badal Sircar. I'm not interested in anyone except Satyadev Dubey. This forum gives me an opportunity to explore my past and *Evam Indrajit* has been a very major part of my life in the past."

Dubey recalled how in an article in Dharmayug on Sombhu Mitra ('indirectly he has made me...whatever kind of director I am today'), he had complained that, with all his undoubted achievements, Mitra had never managed to discover a playwright. On his next visit to Bombay, Mitra saw to it that he meet Dubey, to tell him that he had discovered a new playwright and that *Ebong Indrajit* had already appeared in the periodical Bohurupee. In 1966-67, Karanth, interviewing Dubey, referred to *Ebong Indrajitas* a very exciting play that he had seen in Bengal or heard about. Visiting Calcutta in 1967-68, with his film *Aparichay ke Vindhyachal*, Dubey attended a rehearsal of *Baki Itihas*, directed by Mitra: "I eventually took the script and got Arvind and Sulbha to do it for which incidentally the set design was mine, though I didn't take credit for it."

Dubey had his first direct access to Sircar's text through Pratibha Agrawal's Hindi translation of *Ebong Indrajit*. You cannot forget certain things that becomes so important in your life and one of these was the translation of *Evam Indrajit* that she sent me and I loved it and I took her permission...I don't think I ever paid her any royalty. In fact, later on I made a rule that I'll not pay any royalty because I'm not going to do any commercial production and if the playwright insists on his royalty, which is his right, I'll not do this play, I'll do some other play. But *Evam Indrajit* was such a discovery...I feel so much in love with the play that despite the fact that I

had done a lot of regular productions, odd productions, *Evam Indrajit* became such an obsession that I just could not imagine a production for years and years..... And of course this also set me out in search of Manasi.....till I suddenly realized that Manasi was just round the corner – Sulbha Deshpande! Why I am looking elsewhere?”

Dubey referred to a later press report claiming that Sircar had ‘disowned’ his earlier plays including *Indrajit* and I got furious.....For me it was like denying my entire existence and besides proving me to be a bloody fool which I never thought I was, it was more like sort of having a brother and then being told that he was never your brother....so for a long time, Badal Babu and I were not on talking terms, for I could not forgive somebody when he had destroyed my life.....for taking away something that was so much a part of my existence....this was the sort of extreme, you can say, perverse, attachment that I had with *Evam Indrajit*.”

Sircar clarified: “I have never rejected *Ebong Indrajit*. It only proves the power of the Press...I have never ever rejected my old plays and certainly not *Ebong Indrajit*. I guess someone had asked a question, I was working in the Third Theatre. I must have said that our group will not do *Ebong Indrajit* or such plays now. That is not our priority. That doesn’t mean that as a playwright I rejected *Ebong Indrajit* or *Baki Itihas* or *Sara Rattir* or *Pagla Ghoda*.”

Recounting how in *Aada Chautaal*, which could very easily have been called *Evam Indrajit 1982* and in *Insha Allah* completed in March 1996, with the whole first scene between *Indrajit* and *Manasi* as its first part, followed by a discussion on *Manasi*’s attitude to life, he had gone back, as a playwright, to *Evam Indrajit*, ‘rewriting’ it in his own way. Dubey said, Badal Babu means more than Shakespeare to me, means more than Greek playwrights to me because he has been more a part of my life. It is as simple as that.”

Explaining what he called his ‘obsession’ with *Evam Indrajit*, Dubey said, ‘It was, in its own way, an assertion, a very peculiar kind of an assertion even when people asked, “What is this walking on the road?” It was all there ultimately in that last poem – most people saw it as a poem.....it becomes a positive thing that at least you’re walking, and of course you have shades of Tagore in it. So all those cultural resonance’s were there....the constant echo of the surroundings, not what you might say a cognition of the very object...what I have always loved in plays and in poetry are the echoes which surround a piece of dialogue and therefore the dialogue becomes more evocative.’

Describing the origin of *Ebong Indrajit*, Badal Sircar said: “Actually, I am not primarily a playwright. Primarily I am a theatre man. I started with acting, then I did directing, then I wanted to produce plays. That is why I dabbled in writing. In the beginning, I wrote some comedies, but then you gradually learn the ropes. I could never write anything else, like short stories or novels. So whatever was inside came out in the form of *Ebong Indrajit*. That also I did not begin as a play. I wrote a few pages and was sure that it was not going to be any play. it used to be in my

office bag...four or five sheets and then one day a friend of mine came to my office when I was in somebody else's office. He was waiting and wanted some reading material. He found my file under the telephone directory and being a close friend he took the liberty of taking the sheets out of my file and started reading them. When I came back I snatched it from his hands and he said – Please finish it. That very night I started work on it and I finished it in I think six or seven continuous nights.....I took it to be a private piece of writing. I never thought of publishing it. It got published only because of Samik Bandyopadhyay. I read it at a friend's place and he happened to be present. He was a young man then, not 'the' Samik Bandyopadhyay that he is now! He told my friend that he wanted to have this play published in Bohurupee. Although I was in theatre at the time, I never thought of doing *Ebong Indrajit* because I thought it was a private piece of writing. It is not a play.....not a play to be produced. That is what I thought and if Samik did not insist, probably for years it would have been in my drawer. But then it became public property. There hasn't been a single important Bengali production of this play, although through the staging of this play in Bengali I became a playwright, as Karanth said, he became a National director with his production of this play.

Recording his dissatisfaction with the original Bengali production of the play by Souvanik, directed by Gobindo Ganguly – “that Bengali production is not my play” – Sircar clarified his position on the relationship between the playwright and the director: “The director has absolute freedom to do anything with my play. But I retain one freedom. When I see the play I shall say openly and frankly whatever I think about it. The director must not mind.....but I will not stop the production. I think I have stuck to this throughout my life.”

Asked to speak on origin of *Baki Itihas*, Sircar went back to *Ebong Indrajit*: “Let alone disowning them, I tell my friends that there are three plays out of the fifty odd including short plays and adaptations that I have made, I don't know how I wrote. I mean some ghost made me write them. They are *Ebong Indrajit*, *Sara Rattir* and *Pagla Ghoda*. I never planned *Ebong Indrajit*. It was written when I was in London for two years – very poor, very lonely, and very bored. So I used to write poems. I am no poet, but I just wrote some poems. They are not love poems, nor poems on nature.....but around my thinking, when one is away, in space and time, both, away for two years. I would never have written those poems had I not been away from Calcutta. *Ebong Indrajit* was written from poem to poem. The poems were written between 1957 and 1959. In 1959 I came back to Calcutta and *Ebong Indrajit* was written in 1963. I actually sat with copies of those poems and I would write a little bit and then add a poem. Then I would identify the poem to reach through the dialogue serving as a transition from one person to the next. That is how it was written...”



“I didn’t know where it was going to end. Obviously, Camus. Now, I never can understand books on philosophy.....Camus’ ‘Myth of Sisyphus’. I could never finish.....I read part of it. Something affected me, moved me very much. Something somehow matched my experience. But, I could not continue because it was too difficult for me. Then I read his novel ‘The Plague’ and I thought now I don’t have to read ‘The Myth of Sisyphus’, the rest of it. I’ve got my answer.....

I never disowned it. I couldn’t. But I still say that our group will not do it even now, because that is not our priority. We are doing other kinds of plays. Maybe a day will come when our group will do this play. I am hoping for that day, but not now.”

Criticizing Sombhu Mitra’s production of *Baki Itihas* Sircar said, “Sombhu Mitra is a great director and a great director has to – sometimes – reinterpret the play. That’s one thing. But sometimes it becomes an obsession. [The director feels] if I don’t change something then I become a lesser director. I mean, then it becomes changing it for the sake of changing. Now Sitanath and Kana, Saradindu and Basanti are four separate individuals. Basanti imagines something and writes about the causes of Sitanath’s suicide. Then Saradindu imagines



something. But none of them is satisfied. Then the third act again is Saradindu’s play....It is in Saradindu’s mind. He was thinking so long, but now he is identifying himself, his own experience with Sitanath’s. But that also does not explain the real reason for Sitanath’s suicide. In fact that is not important in the play at all. Now if you use the same set of actors and actresses for both the couples, in the third act, when Saradindu is still there, one new actor has to come. If a new actor comes, it immediately becomes Sitanath’s Ghost. I never meant that and I think Sombhu Babu knew that I didn’t mean it. [There seems to be an attempt to give] the real reason for Sitanath committing suicide. Then Saradindu is nowhere in the play! Thus it changes the entire meaning of the play. But that also has a stunt value, with the same actor doing Saradindu and Sitanath, and the same actress doing Basanti and Kana. But that does not remain my play any more...I had a talk with Tripti Mitra...I openly criticized on that point, and Tripti Mitra being a much simpler person than Sombhu Mitra and very candid, and Sombhu Mitra not being present, said, we had a lot of fun!”

Sircar referred to Rajindarnath’s production of *Baki Itihas* and said, “I felt he was very faithful to the text and he is always faithful to the text. I admire him for that...He understood the play and did it.” Rajindarnath recalled his long argument with Sombhu Mitra on the point: He gave all kinds of intellectual reasons which I couldn’t understand. The result was, he stuck to his point that that is right. I stuck to my point that it is wrong and I won’t do it this way and I didn’t do it that way.....and then as a joke I have been adding whenever there is an opportunity – if in *Baki*

*Itihas*, Sombhu Babu had one actor for two characters, he compensated by having four girls for one girl in *Pagla Ghoda*.”

Answering a question from Rajindarnath, Sircar said that *Baki Itihas* needed a more conscious effort and that it was one play that gave me a lot of trouble. Writing it in Nigeria in 1964-65, the first of the six plays that I wrote in those three years, I started it and got stuck....for months...I had to invent the stories...and I can never invent stories. Practically no play of mine has a story for the simple reason that I can't write stories. But the germ of the third act was already there. In a way it was a kind of recapitulation or rewriting of *Ebong Indrajit* that came out in the third act with a difference. Not the Myth of Sisyphus, but the *Baki Itihas*. Our group – Shatabdi – did not produce *Ebong Indrajit*, but might produce *Baki Itihas*. It is acceptable to us...so that is how it was written, in two stages, with about a six months' gap in between.”

At a seminar at Pune someone had asked: What was the point in writing the third act? The first two stories were quite good! Why did you write the third one at all? Sircar recalled: “My God,” I said, “the third act is the reason for writing the first two acts.”

Gobindo Ganguly, who had directed the original production of *Ebong Indrajit* in Bengali, went into a long sentimental response to the criticism made by Sircar, who was visibly embarrassed.

Shyamanand Jalan described the first step of his production of *Ebong Indrajitas* a kind of entry into the meaning of the text as the playwright had conceived it: “First of all we wanted to understand the play and Badal Da was kind enough to come and talk to us....we got so enamored that we wanted him to continue throughout the rehearsals, but he refused. But we went to the central idea of the play. The central idea of the play is, as he has explained and Pratibha Ji has written it also in the book [of her translation], the state of not having hopes....or, as he described it at that time, non-hope. That was one thing and there was a second thing.....that has now got diluted and we have become habituated to it – terrorism and loss of life, and all that. In the early sixties people were quite a lot concerned with [the threat of] the wiping out of the world because of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb. But that sort of fear has become dormant now, we have accepted in our lives that these things could happen.....so it was new at that time, in the fifties and the sixties, and it was playing in our minds. And therefore the total philosophy of *Evam Indrajit* and the total content of *Evam Indrajit* became very personal.”

Jalan touched upon the problem of language, the existence of different kinds of Hindi, and the problem of transmitting a too literary, elitist Hindi from the stage to an audience which was not the elitist: “PratibhaJi's Hindi is a bit too Sanskritized. How to convey through that Hindi the

meaning of the play to an average audience – that question had to be addressed....grappling with this problem we discovered movements...The whole production of *Evam Indrajit* was geared towards the discovery of images, discovery of inflexions, discovery of ways of speaking, of standing, lighting, to convey the mood and the thoughts. And for this we used circular movements. This was the first attempt on my part to convey the whole thing not through words but through the movements and images which we tried to present.”

Jalan insisted that it was the visualization in moving images that made his *Evam Indrajit* production meaningful and effective in terms of communication: “We were not doing a play. We were conveying something to the audience – some meanings, some observations, some thoughts, in a language which they did not fully understand, and thoughts were not very easy, they required certain receptivity on the part of the audience, a certain intellectual standard to grasp that, and therefore we had to convey it very simply.”

Recalling audience response to the *Anamika* production of *Evam Indrajit*, Jalan said, “Our best audience and the best response that we got were at the show at Kala Mandir, Calcutta, before a Bengali audience. That gave us so much of strength because we were talking in Hindi and we had a hundred percent Bengali audience and they responded to it...The two other performance which come to mind were in Allahabad where we had professor and students and writers in the audience, and in Kanpur where the audience was diametrically different from the other two – an audience of shopkeepers.”

Dubey’s production of *Evam Indrajit* had Sulbha Deshpande as Manasi, Dubey as Indrajit, and Amrish Puri as the writer. Dr. Jabbar Patel recalled the great impact of this production particularly in terms of the brilliant acting by Sulbha and Dubey: “Dubey’s use of space (I still remember Sulbha and walking with a platform behind them, and the use of different light groups as they walked); and the use of different speech patterns; and above everything else the way the whole thing was held together in a beautiful fusion.”

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala’s first production of *Baki Itihas* in 1976 left him with a sense of dissatisfaction from the feeling that he had not been able to explore the play, particularly the psychic side of the human mind, its different layers and how human beings tend to get involved in their small personal tragedies rather than the larger tragedies happening elsewhere. It was this dissatisfaction that drove him to produce it again ten years later, ‘Prompted’ by the Gulf War: more like a personal statement in protest against the war...”I added one or two lines in the end in which I referred to the Gulf War.”

Dubey upheld Arvind Deshpande and Sulbha Deshpande’s interpretation of *Baki Itihas*, in which they followed Sombhu Mitra’s scheme of the same people playing both the sets, for, for him,

Sitanath coming again in the writer's imposition. He also recalled a production in Gujarati of *Evam Indrajit*, directed by Praveen Joshi, with Arvind Joshi, his brother, playing Indrajit, and Sarita, a brilliant actress, playing Manasi, with the sets designed by M. S. Sathyu. The set was full of mushrooms, and yet their style was a sort of Gujarati realism the way they do in professional theatre: "I remember being able to sit through the play, not getting bored, but I said, yes, it is a different play which they are doing....but it didn't do well. The first production of *Evam Indrajit* in Bombay was the Gujarati production. I did it two years later."

Karant referred to yet another Kannada production of *Evam Indrajit* directed by 'Young college student Narasimhan' in Mysore, performed in a college courtyard, with no stage lights at all, with the lights from the classrooms serving as the only lighting arrangement.....He laid a lot of stress on the Indrajit-Manasi relationship. His interpretation was striking because of its simplicity.

Karant recalled that in his initial reading of the text, he had found the Writer most important not Manasi and Indrajit. But later, for his NSD production, he called the play *Amal, Vimal, Kamal* and gave priority to the human relationships in the play. But no human relationship is static. This is the essence of all relationships.....It is just that we undertake journeys in vain, not reaching anywhere.

Jayati Bose found the third act of *Baki Itihas* a continuation of *Ebong Indrajit*, with Indrajit now in his middle age – as Sitanath. "In *Ebong Indrajit*, Indrajit is young, with a lot of hope, which I felt was missing in the nineties.....I see a lot of Saradindus around.....so many of them just thinking about themselves, their careers, and being self-centred. In the last act, Indrajit-Sitanath comes and makes us aware.....asks questions – which I felt are so pertinent and which all of us should ask ourselves about the way we are living." Rajindar Nath interjected, "You have done this play in the nineties, but this is exactly how I felt in 1968 when I did this play – I see in the essential question: Why live? Responsibility and guilt are there, but the question that is repeated again by Sitanath to Sharad is: Why are you living? Whether you call it fatalism or no-hope that is the central core of *Evam Indrajit* and *Baki Itihas* too."

Jayati Bose said that though she found *Baki Itihas* more relevant, she would still like to do *Ebong Indrajit*: "I don't see those young people anymore. But I want to be like them, I want to bring that situation back.....Indrajit haunts me. If it is an obsession for Dubey Ji, it is an obsession for me too. I want to be Indrajit, I think everybody has an Indrajit-like feeling within oneself." Dubey commented: "Thank God, I've seen a woman who wants to be Indrajit.....otherwise women are so stupid."

The last input came from Kumar Roy, lead actor of the Bohurupee *Baki Itihas*, directed by Sombhu Mitra. He explained how Bohurupee had placed the major emphasis on the third act where Sitanath confronts the middle class existence of this professor of literature and his amateur short story writer wife, in their complacent round of domestic chores and Sunday outings, with the rest of history of human beings exploring and mistreating human beings in violation of the norms of social justice, till these people are awakened to an awareness of the ‘Other History’.”

It was an attempt at awakening these people to an awareness of this “Other History” and so at the end of the play (the Bohurupee production), when the news comes of the promotion that the man has got a higher job, the position he wanted, when this news comes, there is a doubt of uncertainty whether it was going to happen or not, a point with which the play had initially begun, that match with the uncertain existence of individuals.

## Plays in a National Perspective

**28<sup>th</sup> November 1996, Post Lunch Session**

**Plays Discussed – A Doll’s House by Henrik Ibsen, Ashi Pakhare Yeti Shantata Court Chalu Aaheand Kamala byVijay Tendulkar.**

With Ibsen as the starting point, the 2<sup>nd</sup> session probed the various representations that Nora has had in Indian theatre and with this came a linking up with the women represented in Vijay Tendulkar’s plays. Tendulkar’s employment of an analytically objective stance leads to all his plays the rich ambivalence of an intensely aware yet impersonal study. If on one plane, *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* trances the mystery and the pain of a woman as victim of the power structure in a family, *Shantata Court Chalu Aahe* is a severe indictment of the so-called educated society who closes down on a single woman probing and laying bare her past and finally rejecting her.



The marginalization rejection of woman is the theme of the next play discussed – *Kamala* where exploitativeness of the whole mechanism of investigative journalism and strategies of the media barns who manipulate them are exposed.



Taking the lead in the discussion, Satyadev Dubey made a reference to Shaw’s ‘What Happens to Nora’ and linked it up with Sombhu Mitra’s production of the play. Dubey pointed out that Ibsen was in all respect a Path Breaker even before Marx (Das Capital was written in 1857) because he had seen the bourgeois world crumbling around him and his plays originated from this experience. Jabbar Patel carried on the discussion by linking up the portrayal of women in Tendulkar’s full-length plays with that in some of his short plays like *Mee Jinkalo Mee Haralo*, *Azgar Ani Gandharv* and *Madi*. His analysis went on to identify Tendulkar’s influence on later generation playwrights and their portrayal of women.

The violence operative in *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* comes to the fore in a more brutal way in *Kamala*. The investigative journalist valorised as a demi-god by the media is encouraged to work with too much confidence encased in a shell of false security. The tragedy of the situation lies in the fact that this demi-God is far too puny to be able to realize the trap he is in. Unsure of his powers and dissatisfied with his position, Jaisingh Yadav arranges a stunt which he thinks is sure to please his boss and assure him of his status as a demi-god. As Tendulkar strips each pretension layer by layer we encounter a weak-willed, gimmickry – loving chauvinist who must have on the one hand his accomplished wife by his side to see him through the numerous parties he has to attend and also be a secretary of sorts, and on the other the woman he has bought who will be material for a first –page-news story.



In the play, this simple poor woman, whom Jaisingh has bought to expose the rampant slave trade in women in many parts of India, quite naively asks Sarita, the ‘lady’ of the house, the price at which she had been bought. This moment is built up by Tendulkar with the unsurpassed feeling of the situation that is so characteristically his own, and Sarita realizes she is nothing more than another Kamala, the only difference being that she was sold to Jaisingh by an establishment that maintains the sanctified ritual called ‘Marriage’.



Interesting insights were provided by the panellists who gave their own interpretations of certain scene in the play, particularly the last one. The fact that one particular director chose to explain Sarita’s resignation to her lot in the end by seeing it has the instinct of motherhood common to all women explains only too well the deliberate naiveté of the director in judging a sensitive and complex play like *Kamala*.


## Plays in a National Perspective

**29 November 1996<sup>st</sup> session,**

**Plays discussed – Ghashiram Kotwal by Vijay Tendulkar, Three Penny Opera and The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertold Brecht.**

With Kamala exploring the faceless and amorphous power equation in one way, the following session on 29.11.1996 dealt with plays in which the questions of power and society become important. The session started with another Tendulkar play – Ghashiram Kotwal, followed by two plays of Brecht – The Three Penny Opera and The Caucasian Chalk Circle. The idea behind linking the three plays originated in treating each as an exercise in critiquing the power-equation as opposed to society or critiquing the individual who wields power to oppress.

Explain the problems of producing Brecht's play in India, Samik Bandyopadhyay pointed out the



Brecht's plays provided ample material to be used and ransacked by directors and adapters all over the world – all those who wanted to make a strong socio-political statement. Quoting from a short poem for Brecht's epitaph 'He made suggestions, we carried them out' he summed up the whole experience of doing a Brecht play as one of carrying out the 'ideas' that lie at the core of a Brecht text.

The discussion that followed again saw a looking into the past and coming up with a variety of association, new discoveries and experiments in production. For Jabbar Patel, who directed the PDA production of Ghashiram Kotwal in Marathi and subsequently the Theatre Academy production of it, the production became an amalgam of various folk traditions like the Khela, the Dash avatar, the Gondhal, the Tamasha, the Bohurupée and the Waghya-Murli. When Bhaskar Chandravarkar came to work for the play, he already had had a Brecht experience (in Ajab Nyaya Vartulacha, an adaptation of The Caucasian Chalk Circle in Marathi). Later on when he came to direct the music in Ghashiram Kotwal, he brought in with him an entire new way of arranging and stylizing the music, experimenting with the different musical forms and the rest of it is history.



For *Teen Paisa Cha Tamasha* Jabbar Patel took for his starting point another idea of Brecht's – that of simple speech and heightened speech. This provided Patel with a clue to his production of *Teen Paisa Cha Tamasha* (an adaptation by P. L. Deshpande of *The Three Penny Opera*). He decided to put to use all the variations of sound – in the talking voice, the voice speaking in rhythm, sound conveying the rhythm and sound conveying music. Now the traditional form of Marathi music gave way to a critique of it in *Teen Paisa Cha Tamasha*. What took its place was a mingling of rock and jazz (particularly the style which has come to be identified with rhythm and blues) to convey a defiance of the system on the one hand and bring out the agony and pathos so characteristic of jazz on the other.



B. V. Karanth in his production of *The Three Penny Opera* used Sugam Sangeet (light music) and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* used the folk form. Dwelling on the aesthetics of sound and its different manifestations, Karanth led us on to a journey of explorations of the 'Swar' and the 'Taal'.

Badal Sircar stressed the value of content in his kind of theatre and went on to explain his production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Gondi). Being aware of the disservice music could do to the content of Brecht's plays (something that Brecht could realize only after the immediate success of *The Three Penny Opera*!) Sircar decided using music in his production. He now explained why he had translated all the songs in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into free verse. For



the songs 'spoken' would bring out more of the typical quality and their meaning, he explained. This also explained his stance about enriching the language of the play through a fresh insight-filled production rather than doing a play just for the sake of it. Small but important productional problems like Grusha's crossing over the bridge to the safety of her brother's home became so vital for Sircar because in his solution he could use both the concern and the tension in an individual's negotiation with a community - The human form as structure on one plane, and on another, as a theatrically effective way of communicating the other. The plight of Grusha and how she overcomes it becomes as important for the actress playing Grusha's role as for the group supporting her on their backs to let her cross. Definite and very well-rehearsed choreographic adjustments are involved in this kind of theatre and the human effort brings out the message more than any poster could convey or any song could put across.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> session**

### **Plays discussed - Party, Pratibimb and Wada Chirebandi**

Before beginning the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day's seminar, moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay explained that there was to be a slight change in the format of the session: the playwrights will be asked to speak first, i.e. Mahesh Elkunchwar was to speak a little about the background of his three plays – Wada Chirebandi, Pratibimb and Party, he added that he would like Mahesh to share with the panel his responses to the productions because they had strong opinions on several of them.

Mahesh began talking about his play Party in a rather negative note saying that he did not care much about the play because when he wrote the play, it did not come from any inner compulsion like Wada or Pratibimba or even Holi or Raktapushpa. For him, Party was an exercise for a playwright which was written in 1974 and produced in 1976 during the emergency.

Till the time Mahesh had written Party, he had three or four characters in his plays – Vasnakand had two, Garbo had four. So while embarking on his new play, he thought that it was easy for him to position 3 or 4 characters against each other and later thought that he must be able to handle about ten, twelve or fifteen characters and orchestrate them. For Mahesh this was a skill he wanted to achieve. So he chose a theme like Party where people of various temperaments, backgrounds and attitudes come together.

Giving an account of how he structured the play, Mahesh said: "I used to have a map of the space in front of me and I used to have coloured pencils for those characters. Damayanti was blue and Mohini was green. I used to move those dots around positioning them against each other. I was enjoying myself." For Mahesh, all characters had an equal stature and the play was more of an exercise which he enjoyed very much.

But looking at Party at present, he said that he found it jaded and very dated, while most of the characters were types – like one very successful writer, another a commercial writer, one

struggling writer, a leftist woman, who had to smoke and wear glasses etc. Mahesh said that Amol Palekar had produced the play and it worked. Shankar Shesh had translated it but the translated version cannot be traced. After having 14 shows, the production had closed though it had worked very well. Mahesh however said that he did not know why the production became a success. He was even more intrigued when Sohag Sen wanted to do the play. He said, “The playwright in this particular case is extremely judgemental. He has taken a definite moral position which is of superiority and I don’t think a writer can do that.....” Mahesh added that he had seen Sohag’s production and did not have much to say about it except the fact that “when you try to write about a milieu like this, it is very difficult to get the right kind of actors.” The characters should not only ‘look’ their respective roles, but they should also be able to act their roles out. Mahesh thought that if one could assemble first rate actors they might be able to put in life, otherwise Party is a dead script.

When Rajindar Nath commented that the theme of Party is dated, Mahesh disagreed to say that the theme is not dated. “It is about an artist, taking a definite stand, a moral stand, a political stand”. Structurally, according to Mahesh, Party is a competently written play, but he was doubtful about the stand his characters take in the play.

He said that after writing Party, he had not written anything for quite some time though he kept his contact with the theatre people of Bombay, especially with Satyadev Dubey. Dubey had told him about a feudal family which had bought a tractor and had never used it. This image struck Mahesh and this image triggered off a series of other images that would help him later to write a play.

After two or three years, Mahesh was talking to Kumudben Mehta, who, advised him to write a play on his village. It suddenly occurred to him that though he had been urbanized over the years, he still had contact with the villages and the only area of his village which he was sure of was his family. He however pointed out that the families depicted were not similar to his. While Mahesh struggled with the first draft, the tractor image about which Dubey had told him appears in the very beginning of the play.

Mahesh called the first draft of Wada Chirebandi “extremely faulty” and said that he had written several drafts of the play. Having several doubts about the quality of the play, he knew it was a departure from his earlier writings. He decided to read it out to his friends in Bombay who liked it, but were frank enough to point out the flaws.

Thereafter Mahesh came back to Nagpur and prepared a second draft which he read out to Satyadev Dubey. He said that Dubey had been a witness to the entire process of his play writing right from the beginning. He also admitted that in the course of writing, there are certain traps laid out for the playwright and he has walked into quite a number of them and has never been able to walk out again. But at the same time, one learns something more about one's own craft.

Speaking in detail, Mahesh explained that in the first draft there is a character of a teacher who appears on stage and there is a scene between Ranju and the teacher. He said that though he thought that the scene was hilarious, most of the people who saw it said that it did not work and is not in tune with the play. He admitted that stylistically it should have been different and the scene was removed. In the fourth draft, the teacher's presence is felt; he visits occasionally and is talked about. Finally Ranju runs away with him.

But when Mahesh saw the production he realized that there was a "big hole". Many people in the audience had told him that it came as a big shock and Ranju running away with the ornaments came as a surprise. Mahesh admitted that he had realized that a writer should not surprise his audiences; he must share every secret with them. In the Bengali and Marathi productions, the character of the teacher is not used, but when Dubey produced it, he had said, "I am going to remove the teacher. The teacher will stay there". Mahesh said that perhaps Dubey had felt that Ranju's eloping with the teacher and with the ornaments will not come as a surprise, and it worked well in the Delhi production.

Mahesh said that if he rewrites Wada Chirebandi, he will bring the teacher as a hanger who will remain with the family with a life of his own. He will be a sycophant to Bhaskar, but will be rude to others. His relationship with Ranju must be shown and he must be integrated into the play.

For Mahesh, Wada was a milestone and the Hindi production launched him as a national playwright. In 1985 when the play was produced by the National School of Drama, Mahesh earned popularity – he said that while Dubey did the Hindi production in Delhi, Vijaya Mehta did it in Marathi.

Speaking about his experience working with Vijaya Mehta for the Marathi production, Mahesh said that Vijaya came over to Nagpur to discuss about the play and she also wanted to know

what 'Wada' architecture was like. Working with Vijaya, Mahesh said, that they had stressed more on characters like Chandu, Bhabi etc. and their interpersonal relationships.

But when Dubey produced the play, he told Mahesh that he was not happy with the ending. He said that the ending has to be rewritten because the socio-economic, political aspect of the play does not come across. Though Mahesh had his reservations, he re-wrote the last one or two scenes for Dubey. He enjoyed the rehearsals and a surprise awaited him when he saw Dubey's production. The set was completely different from what Mahesh had imagined. It was a very powerful set which projected the thematic content of the play. Watching the play, Mahesh realized that in his script, the character Anjali who had been a minor character had suddenly become a very important character. In fact the play ended on Anjali when she comes and sits on the threshold of the Wada. Mahesh found Anjali in two minds – while she is emotionally connected with the 'Wada' family and the Wada culture, she has her grown up son staying in Bombay and there are pulls from the urban life too.

Mahesh said that he was amazed to see Dubey transform his script to something so different and beautiful and to have changed the entire perspective of the play. It had been an enriching experience.

Speaking about Sohag Sen's production, Mahesh said that he had some problems with the production, especially with some regional attitudes, but otherwise it was a good production. Mahesh spoke particularly about his reservations regarding family members touching each other, which in Marathi families is a taboo.

For Mahesh, Wada had been structurally faulty and for the first time he said, he was saying something which was not very personal. His earlier plays were personal statements, while Wada was a play about others and about their problems. "For the first time I think I was opening myself up to the tragedies of other people."

He narrated a rather interesting story as to how he began writing Pratibimb which he wrote after completing the first draft of Wada. He was looking at a book called 'One Dimensional Man' by Marquez which had a photograph of the back of a man looking into a mirror. The man sees only his own back! Struck by the image, Mahesh thought that it could happen to him also. He was

filled with horror and he took up writing the first draft and it took him about two or three days to complete it.

When Dubey produced the play for the first time for Padatik in Calcutta and later in Bombay, he had made a few changes and there have been subsequent changes by other directors also. But for Mahesh it did not matter as long as the ideas came across.

## **Pratibimb**

Pratibimb is a linear play with nothing very complicated about it with several ideas tossed about. When the play is produced in Birmingham, Mahesh received two kinds of reactions to the play from his friends. The first reaction was that it is a very sexist play – this becomes evident when a young girl comes on stage and the man says, “Are you from the Marathi short stories?” Mahesh explains that in the Marathi short stories women had become philanderers and they were labelled in a rather crude and unkind way. The second accusation that was hurled at the play was that Mahesh was against the Leftists.

In the play the character called Jhanda Babu is a leftist who is talked of rather bitterly and people thought that the playwright was against Marx. Mahesh remarked that he had seen Jayati Bose’s production and had liked it. He thought that Jayati was a good actress and the person who played the hero (Rahul) was also a good actor.

Speaking about Pratibimb and Party, Mahesh said that he does not go back to them, but he does go back to plays like Wada, Raktapushpa and Holi. “Some plays are written out of some inner compulsion”. Giving an example of the above remark Mahesh described how he went on to write a new play.

Mahesh had been listening to one of Tagore’s songs, “Aaji Jharer Raate Tomaar Abhisar/ Paransakha Bandhu He amaar.....” Interpreting the song, he thought that the poem was addressed to death and the image of ‘darkness’ along with the theme had hit his imagination. Soon after, there was a death in the family. It was quiet death of a very old relative and everyone had kind words to say about him. Mahesh started tracing the thinking process of the person who

had been ill for quite some time. He finally decided to write a play about a dying man, his last few moments and the final seconds. This was to be magnified to become a ninety minute play.

Mahesh decided that the dialogues would be in the minds of the characters. The wife would go near him and say something but the other characters will not be able to hear her monologue. It has to be assumed. The dead man too says things which are not heard by anybody, because they think that he has lost his power of speech. Mahesh called the play 'Vasansi Jirnani' a term taken directly from the Gita. Explaining this further Mahesh said that the Shloka in Gita said old clothes are discarded and the soul seeks a new set of clothes (Vasansi Jirnani Yatha Vidhaya/ Navani Grhnati Naro Parani). Rajindar Nath wished to know from Mahesh which character he considered was the central character in Wada. He said that in Vijaya Mehta's production, Vijaya as the mother emerges as the central character.

## Tughlaq

Samik wanted to start the discussions on *Tughlaq* with Shyamanand Jalan. He said that the discussions will become interesting because it had Sombhu Mitra acting in it. Samik added that just as he had brought *Ebong Indrajit* to Sombhu Mitra for the first time, he had also brought the English translated version of *Tughlaq* over to Sombhu Mitra who had read the play and liked it. Samik also said that whenever he found something interesting he would take it over to Sombhu Babu. Having read *Tughlaq*, Mitra said that he liked the play but he did not find any psychological consistency in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*. Samik's argument was why does a man have to be psychologically consistent? Is 'psychology' that clearly worked out that everything falls in its place?

Samik Bandyopadhyay pointed out that what was important in the play was the fact that there is history in the making. He added that, any other person would just take advantage of history and play the game of history and also that his arguments with Sombhu Mitra did not yield any result, but after a number of years, he was quite surprised when he heard that Shyamanand Jalan was taking up the production of *Tughlaq* in Bangla with Sombhu Mitra. Samik wanted to know from Shyamanand a little bit of how or why Sombhu Mitra had changed his attitude to *Tughlaq*.

Jalan responded and said '*Tughlaq* was a production which I have enjoyed very much and which is unlike any other production I have done. Why Sombhu Babu agreed to do the play and why

Sombhu Babu ultimately did *Tughlaq* – the answer is one. Because he was the organizer and he had no way out once he had committed himself.’ Jalan said that he was keener on talking about his production, than about the play.

To put the facts across, Samik Bandyopadhyay, asked Jalan to speak briefly about the organization and his relation to it.

Jalan said that in or about 1967-68, an organization was formed by five or six prominent theatre groups of Calcutta in which Anamika was also included. It was decided that every group would perform one play in a festival and then actors from all groups would do a play under the direction of one of the directors. So *Ebong Indrajit* was performed in Kala Mandir under the scheme called ‘*Nat Mancha Pratishtha Samiti*’. Jalan added that after the production of *Ebong Indrajit*, Sombhu Mitra felt that Jalan should be given a chance to do a production. Thereafter Jalan was invited to do a play and he proposed to do *Tughlaq* provided Sombhu Mitra agreed to do the role of *Tughlaq*. Fortunately Sombhu Mitra agreed and the play was to be staged in November or early December. This was a combined production of all the groups like Nandikar, Rupakar, Anamika and others.

Jalan said that he was free to select any actor from any group he wanted and the cast was selected: Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay as Aziz, Sombhu Mitra as Tughlaq, Keya Chakraborty as the Step Mother, Kumar Roy as Imamuddin/ Imam-ul-muluk and Sabitabrata Dutta as Shahabuddin. He explained that the first stage of the production was to read the play. The group started the work in early October and Jalan being in legal circle had a big opportunity since the courts were closed. He said that he found enough time to work on the play.

Apologising to the panel for being anecdotal. Jalan continued to describe a few interesting incidents about the rehearsals, especially a few facts about Sombhu Mitra whom he described as a ‘living legend’ of his times. Jalan described how punctual Mitra was – he would enter the rehearsal room on dot time and would even wait a few minutes outside, if he came a little early. Mitra would even inform Jalan if was to be late even for five or six minutes. Mitra’s discipline and punctuality had a great effect on others. Jalan had the other actors reaching on time for the rehearsals.



Giving another example of how Sombhu Mitra's presence affected other actors, Jalan narrated as to how Keya Chakraborty, a great actress of her time, would tremble with fear on being cast opposite Mitra. Jalan said that he failed to understand what made an actress like Keya so afraid of Mitra.

Jalan spoke about Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, another stalwart of Bengali theatre who was to do the role of Aziz, a psychologically complex character. But after four or five rehearsals, Ajitesh started missing rehearsals and ultimately refused to do the role. Jalan said '(he) would have made a great Aziz I have no doubt about it.....and a great counterfoil to Sombhu Mitra.'

Jalan narrated that while rehearsing, Mitra would go on psychologically exploring a scene and Jalan's job was to agree with him. For three weeks there was no development and Mitra would say, "I do not find psychological consistency. I can't do this play." Jalan remembered the panel that Samik Bandyopadhyay had already referred to Mitra's observation regarding the play in the beginning of the discussion. Jalan said that he told Mitra that the choice of doing or not doing the play lay with him, but he decided to try again. Jalan expressed his happiness in ultimately being able to convince Mitra about the psychological connection. Jalan doubted that perhaps he had convinced himself and Jalan had helped him in convincing himself.

Giving a detailed picture of Sombhu Mitra's rehearsing pattern, Jalan said that when Mitra was doing this play, he was around sixty/sixty-one years of age. But even at that age, he would not sit down even for a minute when rehearsals were done from nine in the morning, till two in the afternoon. His method of rehearsing would be to move with the character. Jalan said that from the beginning he had decided not to impose himself as a director, had he done so, the production could never have been done. Jalan added that he acted more like a referee than as a producer.

For benefit of the production, Jalan said that after rehearsing with Mitra he had to rehearse with other actors at nine in the night because of their own preoccupations – rehearsals of their own plays, attending call shows of their group etc, Many times they would start rehearsals at nine at night and finish at twelve when Sombhu Mitra was never available. Jalan said that Mitra wanted to rehearse at a particular time and this was the time one could rehearse with him.

Elaborating further on Mitra's rehearsing style Jalan said that in the beginning he frequently changed his acting style. When he spoke out the lines, they were not perfect, but it was the gist of

the entire dialogue in his own language which was fifty percent the written language and fifty percent his own. Jalan added “but not one thought was missed, not one emotional response was missed. The words were different, but the content detail was the same. But on the fourth day of the rehearsal, he was word perfect with even the punctuations intact. There was no fumbling, no prompting, there was no mistake.....it was complete.” Jalan said that Mitra must have worked for four or five hours every day on the script and on the role itself. Jalan explained that this was the method that went on and he recreated the whole thing.

But Jalan made it clear that Mitra was not autocratic because in certain portion of the play Jalan had changed the movements completely. Jalan said that he even suggested certain things to him (like using a particular light spot) and Mitra had taken the hint of the director and believed in the fact that the director’s word is the last word in a production.

Mitra however often came back to the question of psychological consistency to which Jalan argued that man is psychologically complex and why should they look for psychological consistency at all? Jalan had argued that “man’s actions are born not out of rationality but out of the total personality.” But Mitra insisted that while doing *Tughlaq* he had to be consistent, he had to understand why he did it – the cause and the effect were so strongly inter-related in his mind that it was difficult to discuss with him.

While discussing the last scene of *Tughlaq*, Jalan had asked Mitra how he proposed to do the scene when he is confronted with Aziz. Jalan had suggested that he as *Tughlaq* should laugh out at the futility of his life, the futility of the world, the futility of the entire politics. Jalan said that Alkazi too in his production had used the same thing. Jalan wanted *Tughlaq* to laugh out with a long mocking laugh and then sit down on the throne and gradually sink. Then he is no longer concerned with the world, life and other things. Jalan said that he had never suggested that *Tughlaq* dies in his production, as has been done in some other productions.

Jalan had told him, “If you have been with me for twelve and a half scenes and I have convinced you (the action) for twelve and a half scenes, so now you should find a solution as to how the actors should behave or otherwise accept whatever I am saying.” Jalan said that ultimately ‘he did it the way he had told him but Jalan observed that he laughed out as suggested, but it was a weak attempt.’ Jalan also added that everywhere else he was satisfied. But in the last scene Mitra came out with a very unconvincing laugh – Jalan commented that it was a weak laugh that turned out to be a “mockery of something (he) had suggested.”

Jalan turned a little critical when he described what he called “a hilarious incident” when Sombhu Mitra entered the stage skipping one scene altogether.

Jalan had reminiscence that he had been watching Sombhu Mitra since 1962. In 1967 he had watched a festival of plays in New Empire when Mitra staged all his plays. Jalan commented that he was tired of his acting style but when he watched him act in *Tughlaq*, he was floored and he regarded it as a great piece of acting because the actor was great. Jalan added that three months later, he had gone to see *Oedipus Rex* in the Academy of Fine Arts. But he had walked out in the interval because he did not like Mitra’s acting at all. Jalan said that he had used the same mannerisms, the same movements, the same inflexions which he had done in *Tughlaq*. He was surprised to see Mitra in not being able to check himself from repeating himself again and again. Jalan gives an example and described that in *Tughlaq* in a particular scene with the step mother he had a definite movement when he spoke out his lines. Jalan said that he had repeated the same action with Tripti Mitra as Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex* also. Jalan thought that Mitra had a penchant to look young (This was evident in Galileo).

In *Tughlaq*, in the initial *Tughlaq*, one could see that this was the young Tughlaq doing the young Galileo. His acting was full of mannerisms. But Jalan admitted that Mitra was a great actor. He also said that going through the play now and he was fascinated by the character of Tughlaq more as an actor than as a director.

Samik Bandyopadhyay had a last question for Shyamanand and said for history and for the records he wanted Shyamanand to put across a very objective view of the text of the play and what came across in the production. And Shyamanand responding to this said that he never saw the play because throughout the production he was busy with Sombhu Mitra. He said, “It was a rare honour to direct Sombhu Mitra. It was something like thinking you would be directing Sir Laurence Olivier, Sombhu Mitra, the stalwart personality that he was in the theatre at that time.....”

When Samik Bandyopadhyay added that he hadn’t been directed by anybody else, Jalan added that earlier he had been directed by Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay in *Mudrarakshasha*.

Samik said, this was just a year before *Tughlaq* and for the same reason, because it was his organization and he had to do it. Samik explained that the whole difficulty emanated from one thing. Whenever he had taken up any playwright excepting Rabindra Nath Tagore or any other well-known playwright, he was not open to suggestions of anything beyond lyricism, beyond continuity, beyond cause and effect, psychological consistency etc. Samik said that he had certain contempt for the Indian playwright and it was surprising that a man like Mitra, who appreciated poetry so much and could receive vague thoughts and images so well, could not receive them in theatre. Samik added that he always took lyrical plays “his plays are poetry” he said, but in responding to the image in the theatre, Mitra was not open.

Samik then asked Satyadev Dubey who had also directed *Tughlaq*, to speak about his production.

Before Dubey’s response, Swarn Chowdhury wished to know as to who had done the other Bengali version of the play. Girish Karnad the playwright of *Tughlaq* said that Sekhar Chatterjee had done the other Bengali version. Swarn also wanted to know who acted as Barani to which Shyamanand Jalan replied that Rudraprasad Sengupta had enacted the role of Barani.

Dubey began narrating his experience about the production of *Tughlaq* by confessing that a lot of ‘misunderstandings’ took place when he began his production because he had assumed that if he thought a thing, the other person must agree to it. Dubey called himself ‘unreasonably unreasonable’ and said that due to this Karnad had to suffer the brunt. He also added that Karnad was strong and it has not harmed him.

Dubey said that he liked the play but he was frustrated because it involved a large cast. This was a problem he could not solve, but he humorously added that getting a large cast of women had never been a problem for him. His last play had 12 women. He added that having known the play before, he resented the National School of Drama doing it. He had given several readings of *Tughlaq* in Bombay – it was Karanth’s translation of the play. Dubey said that he remembered reading the play at Vinod Doshi’s house. He added that Vinod Doshi and Sarayu Doshi were extremely helpful and gave a lot of help to Dubey for his production.

Giving a brief history about the problems that arose regarding the rights of *Tughlaq*, Dubey narrated that Alyque Padamsee had made a condition that no *Tughlaq* show would be done before his. Dubey said that in a fit of anger he declared that he wanted the Hindi rights, because he thought that a lot of directors could create territories. Dubey said that initially there was an understanding that if somebody was doing a production in Bombay, no other production would come to Bombay for a certain time.

Girish Karnad had agreed to Dubey's demand that he would have the Hindi rights. But when Dubey kept on postponing the production for various reasons, it made him feel guilty. Dubey said that in 1984/85 he had done a one year workshop in Pune and travelling every Saturday and Sunday with a group of new boys. Dubey added that they had finally agreed to do *Tughlaq* and decided that Dubey would act as Tughlaq in this production.

Dubey commented that in trying to understand *Tughlaq* he had made a lot of connections and said, "a director has to find a personal equation with the play and that ultimately means with the central character." Dubey said that the design of sets had bothered him and he ultimately requested Girish to rewrite the play for him. Dubey made it clear that when he said 'rewrite' he meant that some of the scenes were to be changed, there were some practical considerations that were to be taken into account.

Elaborating this further, Dubey said, "I made it into a folk play. I couldn't afford sets, I couldn't afford costumes, and I couldn't afford weapons." – describing the set Dubey said there was one plywood sword hanging painted in red to suggest the weaponry and the 'lathis'.

Speaking about the structure of *Tughlaq*, Dubey said that the habit of the Indian mind to be episodic had always bothered him. He said that *Tughlaq* was episodic in structure yet it had an Ibsenite character in it.....Form wise on one level it was not real, but every scene made a lot of sense and the inter-connections were tremendous.

Dubey spoke about the scene changes and blackouts and said that they hindered the play from reaching out to the audience (he gave an example of *Wada Chirebandi*, a nine hour production) and said that he did away with the sets and when Karnad finally wrote it, he created a *Sutradhar*. This solved a lot of problems because little is known about the age of *Tughlaq*; there is no background to *Tughlaq*, to the state of affairs at that time. The *Sutradhar* in the play talks about the various aspects of perception and also says that he was to play the role of *Barani*. Incidentally, *Barani* is the name of the historian. The *Sutradhar* puts on *Barani's* cap and he goes into this fantastic description of the times and about his commitment to Islam. Dubey added that *Barani* is an honest historian but a fanatic one. Whenever *Barani* could be present, he would connect the incidents because he was a historian of that time and when *Barani* could not logically be present, he would take off the cap and speak like a Hindu *Sutradhar*.

Referring to another interesting aspect – the lookalike element of the play, Dubey said that it always bothered him. He was worried as to how to achieve the lookalike effect. Dubey explained that he made *Tughlaq* playing *Aziz* and *Aziz* playing *Tughlaq*. These actors were continuously inter-changing throughout the play. Dubey felt that after the first two scenes, the audience was not bothered.

Speaking about the characters, Dubey said that one of his favourite characters was Shahabuddin. Relating his own experience Dubey said that being in theatre and working with young actors – some of whom had betrayed him, while some stayed on, he knew what betrayal was and the double attitude that a senior has towards youngsters.

Dubey spoke about the court scene which had some very beautiful lines, but he also said that he never liked the court scene where everything seemed ‘remote’. Girish then wrote the scene in a different manner and the scene takes place before the court scene.

In the play Tughlaq says that they will read the Namaz elsewhere. Dubey said that this is established and it goes against the written play. In the anti-chamber, Tughlaq speaks to Shahabuddin and tries to convince him. In the end when the ‘Azan’ begins, Tughlaq says that it is too late and they would hold the ‘Namaz’ there itself. Dubey said that the scene involved a lot of rituals which may be visually enriching but he was never impressed by rituals and never used them. The rituals being eliminated, there was a blackout and while the ‘Azan’ is sung in the background, Barani’s voice is heard in the darkness and as he finishes, the lights come and Shahabuddin is arrested. He is held by two people and Tughlaq asks him as to why he had acted in this manner and the scene builds up finally to the murder of Shahabuddin. Dubey reminded the panellists that the murder scene did not have a single dagger but it had the same impact. The actor acted it out very violently.....he said. Thereafter Tughlaq leaves Delhi and the entire description of the journey is done by Barani. Dubey said that he did not remember whether he kept the Aziz-Azam scene there or not, but the build-up to Tughlaq leaving Delhi worked out very well. Dubey thought that by following this technique there was no gap at all between scenes and the murder of Imamuddin. The rampart scene in which Imamuddin comes to meet Tughlaq happened to be Dubey’s favourite scene and he said that his actors had rehearsed it so much that it became their ‘show scene’. Dubey called it ‘quintessential drama’ and felt that there has been no scene between two people which is so beautiful. He added that the scene has emotions which has dialectics, which is a discussion – something which I live – arguments – and two people poised for against each other – very strong –

Dubey explaining the scene further said that it was a ‘constant scene’ and the man playing the role of Sheikh Imamuddin after his death comes as Tughlaq. Dubey said that it takes a second to realize it, but the name is announced and people know it is Tughlaq. But even then there is a bit of confusion and Dubey said, “I got the advantage that when he talks – I felt all those arrows piercing my own body.” Dubey felt that somehow that image is a very haunting image in which Tughlaq talks about the death of Imamuddin and the peculiar kind of ambivalence he had. The same actor, when he is Imamuddin, says it, Dubey presumed that the scheme worked because it was interesting and worked well.

Referring to one of his favourite scenes of the play, Dubey said that the “conspiracy scene” has been his favourite in which Girish Karnad’s famous thesis about the minority is illustrated. Girish had said that the minority has no choice but to betray. The characters sit in the shadows

and suddenly Shahabuddin emerges and confronts and the Sheikh just before this ironically says, “this should not be done.”

Dubey explained that he did not try to create any incestuous feeling between Tughlaq and the step-mother in his production, but there was a certain fondness between them. He said that he has portrayed a woman who is the step-mother and a man who is intimate. He wanted the audience to feel their relationship, especially when Tughlaq commands that she be stoned to death.

Speaking about stage directions, Dubey said, “You cannot have Tughlaq being mystical upstage. It has to be downstage. It is one of the things I learnt from Putulkhela (a play popularized by Bohurupee)”. Dubey added that the most important lines have to be downstage and middle stage if the dialogues express strong sentiments. But a mystical experience cannot be belted out, he said, ‘it has to be loud enough, the projection must be clear’.....Dubey described that they had two people walking with mashals and the lighting turned out to be excellent. Dubey said that a film director like Govind Nihalani had complimented the scene and said that he could not make out when the real light came on. It left Dubey satisfied. As stage props they only had three modhas (stool) on the stage and Dubey did not use the levels.

Moving on to an interesting incident regarding not having levels in the play, Dubey said that Tughlaq was eliminated in the first round of the Maharashtra State Drama Competition and one of the criticism was, that the play did not have levels! Dubey added a tinge of humour to narrate a joke which he thought was historically important. In the late 50s and early 60s, they had been reading a lot of plays and novels and have been talking of various ‘levels’ at which a novel worked. Dubey jokingly said that in Marathi it got translated into wooden levels. Dubey said that he hated ‘levels’ (wooden) because they are expensive and it is difficult if you have not rehearsed on them. But the criticism the play received was literally true.

Responding to Shyamanand Jalan’s query as to whether the particular version has been published or not, Dubey replied that although he has a copy, the version was not published. He humorously added that another copy was with Arun Kakade and if they asked Dr Pratibha Agrawal to track it, she would certainly do it and make Arun Kakade search for the copy in his cupboard. “You see, you should put the right person on the right job,” he joked.

Dubey mentioned that in the Dropper’s production, one of the persons who played Tughlaq was Anand Lagoo. He finally got the role because many people had walked out of the role and there was a time constraint also. He had requested Dubey not to throw him out and was similar to Raja Mathu in his attitude. Dubey complimented Anand Lagoo for his organizational capabilities.

Speaking about an aspect of the production, Dubey said that in the famine scene he had put a light spot and got all the people under it. He said, “It made a good visual out of that because we had the lights and there were little elements of stylization. I just cut off movement.” Dubey continued to say that he had Jyoti Deshpande, G.P. Deshpande’s wife playing Tughlaq’s mother. A scene of betrayal pervaded the play and Dubey added that personally he could identify with

this, because he had left betrayed, rightly or wrongly, several times in his life. Dubey said that the play portrayed an emotional breakdown of Tughlaq and that Girish had written a beautiful scene.

Dubey continued to describe the production and said that most of the crowd scenes followed the same pattern with just one spot and with all characters underneath it. He said that this was like cinema, where this technique is used. In between he had the Hindu Sutradhar entering the stage and the other connections were being made.

Describing the final scene, Dubey explained that he had Tughlaq seating, facing each other. He said that when he read the play he had thought that Aziz is another kind of Tughlaq, only placed in a different 'arena'. Dubey explained that though he did not remember exactly how he ended the play, he remembered that it was a quiet end, with Barani going mad and finally Aziz getting up and Tughlaq sitting down very non-dramatically. Thereafter Barani takes off his cap and concludes the story, when Tughlaq is in Delhi. He is thought of as a saint. Even all the Hindus go to see him. They had Jaya Patwardhan to do the scene finally.

Dubey repeated that in his production there was no extra props – no daggers, just the black 'togas' and something round the waist. Dubey said that the whole production till the time they staged it with costumes, did not cost them beyond five thousand rupees. They had used the worst material, just the one sword hanging and three modhas. Dubey explained that they did about 25 shows without paying any fees to anybody. Dubey summed up his experience saying "It was a good experience. Without actually cutting out anything in the play, the length became very very reasonable – with an interval it was about 2 hours and 15 minutes. It was taut and the words.....everything I believe in words and I think we rehearsed enough....but then it was a strong play and Girish finally saw it in Pune."

After Satyadev Dubey's presentation on his production of *Tughlaq*, moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay requested Swarn Chowdhury to share her experience about her production.

Swarn said that after the masters who have spoken i.e. Shyamanand Jalan and Satyadev Dubey about *Tughlaq* her's was a humble effort. Swarn called herself an artist on a much smaller scale and admitted that she dealt with intimate, women oriented plays better. She preferred a canvas that was small and light, where artists can emote. She also said that she could perhaps do justice to the play now.

Describing how she got to do *Tughlaq*, Swarn said that in 1973 she was roped with into doing *Tughlaq* when at that time she was doing a lot of Indo-Anglican theatre. Swarn stated that by that time she had done five regional language plays in English. She came to chance upon the late Vimal Bhagat, a very fine actor and his brother Kamal Bhagat two look alike and that is how the idea came. Vimal was very keen but Swarn had a hesitation – she wanted to do smaller plays. But then they finally decided to do the production. Swarn admitted that she did falter, not having tight control over it, but she felt that certain scenes, even with her handicap, did come across.



She said “the English speaking audience of Calcutta loved it because I don’t think we had any English Tughlaq before that and they had a lot of ‘house full’ shows in spite of us using a bad auditorium.

Answering Girish Karnad’s question as to whether her production preceded Alyque Padamsee’s, Swarn replied that her production was done after his. She further described that the lady – Zarin Chowdhury, who had designed costumes for Alyque had done the role of the step-mother in her production. Swarn said that they had good actors – Vimal and Kamal were two brothers, they had Kabir Seth (Roshan Seth’s brother) and Rustam Varucha. Commenting on the production Swarn said, ‘the play could have worked.....but I don’t know what happened.....I think we had 15 houseful shows and I think I lost it. I literally said Tughlaq has broken my back because after that I went away from theatre for seven years.’

Swarn said that they had remained very faithful to the text. She loved the intrigue scene. She explained that it was a very tight scene and that they all felt that there was a menace in the air. But unfortunately Swarn lamented the fact that Zarin as the step-mother and Vimal as Tughlaq did not go along well. Swarn was happy about the crowd scenes of her play and said: Tughlaq became a very humming production because she had too many people around eager to be the part of the production. So she kept on changing the same people between soldiers and the people in the crowd, in the crowd scenes which had become very effective.

Explaining an interesting incident about *Tughlaq*, Swarn said that they had an expensive

Chess-board as a stage-prop. Somebody had owned this unique piece and had given it to the group. But unfortunately one piece of that valuable chess board got lost during a show. Swarn described that throughout the night Navin Kishore, the stage manager and Swarn herself searched for that piece and finally found it at four o’clock in the morning. They had found it stuck under one of the boards.

Giving further details of her production of Tughlaq, Swarn said that they got a genuine Maulavi to recite the Azan. They had got him from a Masjid and when he came he insisted that everybody should cover their heads with handkerchiefs when he recited the Azan. During the rehearsals too, the actors had to cover their heads when the Azan was sung. Swarn described the scene when Tughlaq sinks and how the Maulavi got into the spirit and delivered one of the best Azan. She said that it was a hair-raising experience for the audience also.

After Swarn Chowdhury Dubey wished to add something more about the production and said that he did not allow Tughlaq’s first speech in the first scene. He said that it has always been the custom that the entry of an actor – character must be built-up. But Dubey felt that there was no point in following this because Aziz was saying all the things that Tughlaq was saying and the scene between Aziz and Azam was also there. So Tughlaq’s first speech would have no congregation and as such Dubey had started with Tughlaq being in the house with his step-mother, asking her what she had been doing. Dubey said that he wanted to bring out the step-

mother, he said, 'it had a lot of promise without adding any scenes. I felt she resisted much more.'

Before asking the playwright Girish Karnad to respond, moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay referred to a 'problem' that came up again and again, especially from the Alkazi Production which had circulated quite a lot. Samik said that he had seen the production in Calcutta and had a poor impression of it. He thought that it was very disappointing experience after having loved and adored the text for so long.

Samik described the production as being slow and a plodding kind of a spectacle. There were long patches where a sentry would march from one end of the stage to another.....the lighting and opening it up so relaxed, nothing of the history, nothing of the passions, and nothing of the involvement that one feels with the character. Samik added that probably because there is the Parsi Theatre Tradition of grand historical, people often tends to take Tughlaq and plant it there. Samik recalled that years ago, in one of his very first conversations Dubey had told him that he would like to do Tughlaq making even Hindi of the Hindi translation much simple language and with all Urdu phrases and the Urdu richness being left out. Dubey had explained that by doing so it becomes "your play and my play". About Alkazi's production Samik said "so that fear and that danger and a way of appropriating that into the Parsi theatre model.....that remains." He had felt this in and did not like the production.

Karnad's response was very interesting when he said, "I don't feel anymore that I have written Tughlaq. I've seen so many productions, heard so many discussions, seen so many interpretations that the umbilical cord has long disappeared....."

Moving on to narrate a rather humorous incident, Karnad said that he was acting in a television film for Sridhar Kshirsagar against the actress Mita Vashist. When they met on the first day, Mita had said, 'O my God! Are you playing my husband? I thought you were going to play my father.' When Karnad asked her as to why she thought so, Mita had replied that they had studied Tughlaq all the time in the National School of Drama and she had thought that Karnad was 70 years old! Karnad added that in actuality, the play has become that distant for him.

Referring to Alkazi's production of Tughlaq. Karnad said that he hadn't seen it, but he had seen Om Shivpuri's production, which was done way back for AIFACS and that it was done very well. Om Shivpuri then had decided to do his own production which he did in the Purana Quilla (Delhi) and it worked tremendously as a spectacle. Karnad added, "It was sort of a son-et-lumiere of Tughlaq, because I'd seen this spectacle and then when you shift this sort of a thing to an ordinary stage, it doesn't work." Karnad said that he did not see the later production on stage but he did see Alkazi's 'Andha Yug' in Bombay, which he thought was a disaster but added that it was apparently a great success in Delhi, again at the Purana Quilla.

Karnad said that he had some very interesting experience about Tughlaq. Citing an example from Alyque Padamsee's production Karnad said that in the play the prayer starts and half-way

through the prayer the Hindu soldiers are supposed to come in and disturb the prayer. But that did not happen and the entire prayer was completed after which the Hindus came. Karnad said that he was dismayed at this and had asked Alyque as to why he did it, 'this is ridiculous' he had said. Alyque's reply was "I was so moved by the spectacle of the prayer that I couldn't disturb it."

Commenting on this Karnad said that only a westernized Muslim could have said this because in the history of Islam there are so many instances where people are killed during prayers. Karnad explained that the prayer was used as the time to attack people. He further said that an orthodox Muslim would definitely have problems with that scene.

Karnad moved on to discuss another interesting points, which he thought was a problem with plays in a sense that they become 'topical and after the shift changes, say after 20 years, they again become topical.' Explaining this point, Karnad referred to Satyadev Dubey's production and described an incident that had taken place soon after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. Karnad said that there was a line in the play where the old guards say to a young guard: "this fort has been strongly protected from outside, but if it collapses, it will collapse for inner weakness." Karnad explained that immediately the audience would react, in a way as if Karnad had written the play on Indira Gandhi's death.

Karnad however referred to this as "the pleasure of theatre", where it keeps on getting new meanings. He also said that he was glad that this relates to what Ratan Thiyam had brought up earlier and he was also glad to hear Satyadev Dubey tell him, 'I don't know whether you write good plays, but you re-write them very well!'

Karnad admitted that he did re-write his plays very well and for him one of the pleasures of writing was to be able to re-write.

Simultaneously he spoke about an incident which he called as 'one of the great regrets' of his life and said that he wished to mention this to Dubey in the seminar itself. Karnad said that while Dubey was rehearsing for *Aate ka Kukkut* with Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah and Sunila Pradhan, Dubey had been telling Karnad that things were not working out and that he was not satisfied with the way the play was progressing. Karnad had questioned Dubey the reasons for this, but being in Bombay, he did not attend a single rehearsal. Now, on looking back, Karnad lamented that perhaps had he been at the rehearsals working with such an intelligent cast, he could have sorted out the problems of the play, about which he was still unaware.

Karnad then moved on to another very important aspect of production and said that it was very important for the playwright to work with the groups. Karnad explained 'what happens here is that you publish a pay out of helplessness. If you don't publish a play, the group doesn't get to know it.....given this condition of the Indian theatre, it can be years before a production can happen.' Explaining this Karnad said that Dubey, after reading Tughlaq's manuscript had said that after reading the play many times he was upset on two accounts – firstly, for not being able

to do it and secondly for not being able to write it. Karnad thought that it was a great compliment, but it took Dubey 20 years to do it.

Going back to the subject of publishing a play in order to be produced, Karnad said that in England and in America, where there are tensions between playwrights and directors, a director has liberties. Explaining this Karnad said apparently Simon Sallow's book says that for Amadeus, Peter Shaffer came with a play that was six and a half hours long. Later with Paul Scofield, Simon Callow, John Baxter and others, the duration of the play was brought down. Karnad said that as a creator the playwright puts in a lot, but to imagine the whole craft of the stage sitting in your living room is not possible. He said that unfortunately, the idea that the 'playwright is Sacrosanct' has come from the way Shakespeare has been taught to them. He explained, "The British pushed Shakespeare down our throats as a person whose one word can't be changed. But folios after folios show that Shakespeare had been changing it all the time. The way Shakespeare has been produced through the centuries has been changed till the early twentieth century by the actors and managers.

Karnad says that they lacked this opportunity of being able to bring out the correct changes. He cited an example from his play *Agnijal (Fire and the Rain)* where for the only time he had a fight with the director. Karnad had given the play to the National School of Drama who were interested about producing it. He gave it to the theatre director Prasanna because Karnad had felt that Prasanna was a bright man who hadn't had an opportunity. In Karnataka, he was lost and needed a break. So Karnad had suggested his name as the director and they often met each other in Delhi.

But when Karnad saw the production, he found that Prasanna had cut out half an hour of the play without telling him. For him it was a 'betrayal' because both Satyadev Dubey and Karanth knew that they had discussed the play endlessly. Karnad described that originally the play ended with Indra appearing, followed by the rains, but Prasanna had deleted this part. Karnad said he did not know whether it was cut to fit into Prasanna's Marxist background. He explained that it was like doing Oresteis without the final sequence in the temple of Athena – which according to him is the moral and ethical point of the play.

Karnad clarified that had Prasanna told him what he wanted, he could have re-written the some parts because he felt that certain scenes do not work on stage and this can be realized only after seeing the production. He said, 'I have cut out the scenes and I have continually been re-writing.....and I don't think what one writes is the final word. It can possibly be because other people can give so much to it. I think a text should be published at least after one professional production.'

Ratan Thiyam had a question for Karnad and said that in many countries a play written by someone is being re-written by another playwright. How would Karnad react if somebody else was writing his play again?

Karnad replied that unlike Dubey he was not used to expressing his arrogance but he doubted whether anyone could improve on his plays. He said that he regarded himself as a good playwright and was able to improve if it needed to be done.

Giving reasons as to why Karnad had never acted or produced his own plays, he said that by the end of the play he would have exhausted himself putting everything possible into it. Complimenting Dubey, Karnad said that he knows his text like the back of his hand and he as the playwright had worked out all the connections. If something had to be disturbed, he knew where it was to be disturbed, if somebody could tell him. But if he were to produce a play or write a film script, Karnad would only take someone else's play, because only then can he come afresh and write a film script of *Tughlaq*, but he had refused the offer and had explained his inability, saying that in this case someone else can do a better film script out of it.

Ratan Thiyam apprised Karnad of the fact that a group called 'Lakrees' based in Lucknow which was committed to physical theatre and was close to Badal Sircar, has done Karnad's *Tughlaq*.

When Karnad said that he hadn't seen the production, Ratan described their production as being physical theatre where the long dialogues of *Tughlaq* were not matching the actions i.e. the dialogues seemed unrealistic in the physical theatre model. Ratan then asked Karnad that if anybody keeps the thematic content intact structure-wise and cuts off the dialogue and re-writes the play, would Karnad object to it.

Karnad replied that he had never objected and in fact he had helped with the re-writing. Referring to Dubey's production, Karnad said that Dubey had a valid point – the point he made was that the whole play has to be kept, but even then the historical context was not clear. So Dubey needed a Sutradhar to jettison the play together. Karnad explained that this was the reason why he had the Sutradhar and the Muslim historian Barani added to the play.

Explaining some more details about the Muslim historian, Karnad said that the prophet when he was at the age of 45 ran away from Mecca to Medina. He had only one companion with him. Within hundred years of that incident Islam had spread to Persia to Afghanistan and to the Middle East. Within two hundred years, it had covered the whole of the Middle East and was on the move. To the Muslim the word of God being spread was a physical fact. Karnad said that there was no similar phenomenon in world history except Marxism.

But this was in total contrast with the Hindu historians, to whom, even the cyclic nature of the universe and birth and death at any time would not be very important. Karnad said "this dynamic Semitic idea that this starts from a particular point and it develops into history is very much of a Jewish notion which comes across in the Old Testament, but in terms of the word of God being here – only the Islamic historians did it."

Karnad explains that if anyone read Barani in original one can see the confidence with which he says that *Tughlaq* is wrong because he is not going according to the word of God.

Karnad pointed out that this throws open a very interesting contrast – a Hindu Sutradhar looking at Muslim history and then this sort of a continual shifting from him to the Muslim histories. This is present in Najib when he says that he cannot see any purpose in history to which Barani replies that this is because of his Hindu childhood. But Karnad also mentioned that it was not explicit in the play, but it gave a structure to the text he wrote for Satyadev Dubey.

Dubey clarifying this point further added that he thought there has not been a single piece of work in secular India which has talked of Islam so convincingly, bringing out its positive qualities through Barani. Dubey said that as Girish had pointed out, there was no dichotomy within and the frights of India.....beware of these Hindus, they embrace you and then perhaps betray you. It is a sympathetic picture that is portrayed and the portrayal has been very honest.

Dubey spoke of his apprehensions regarding the religious issues in Pune going by the experience one had for Ghashiram Kotwal. But fortunately *Tughlaq* had changed everything and after sometime the Brahmin Puneites identified themselves with Tughlaq.

The play, Dubey added, had broken a lot of resistance and said that Tughlaq's ambivalence which was cut off in the first version of the NSD production under Alkazi had been the most beautiful. It had portrayed the dialectics through the discussion between Tughlaq and the Imam. Barani had created the picture and it had been a sympathetic picture as to how Islam had spread historically and the consequent regeneration which it brought to a lot of religions including Buddhism and Hinduism. It was truly remarkable.

## **Hayavadana**

At this point, moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay wished to move on to the discussion of Karnad's Hayavadana with Rajindar Nath as the first speaker.

Before Rajindar Nath began, Karnad said that he would also like to hear what Mahesh had to say about Hayavadana because he had read of various reports of his reaction to the folk idiom. Karnad said that he did not agree with the views expressed, but since he has read them through someone else, it would be better to hear of his views directly.

Rajindar Nath began his discussion by saying that certain plays are talked about more before the productions, and Hayavadana is one of them. He said that he had heard about the play in one of the seminars of Sangeet Natak Academi in 1971 in which Karnad was also present.

Nath said that regarding Hayavadana it was particularly stated that the play was written in the folk tradition and the factor which was constantly mentioned was the use of the half-curtain. Nath said that he had not read the play then but had heard of these things.

Thereafter two productions of Hayavadana were staged - the first was by B V Karanth, in Delhi and the second by Dubey in Bombay. Nath said being a Delhi-based director, there was no opportunity for him to do his production in Delhi because Karanth had already done it.

But on going through the play, Nath was convinced that it had nothing to do with the folk-plays. He thought that the content of the play was so sophisticated and modern that if folk elements were added to the play, it could add to the theatrical value, but they were not essential to the play. Rajindar Nath specially objected to the use of the half-curtain and eliminated its use when he did his own production a little later.

An invitation from Anamika, a theatre group based in Calcutta reached Rajindar Nath to do a play for them. Since Hayavadana had not been staged in Calcutta, Rajindar suggested that they could take up this play by Karnad. But before Nath reached Calcutta he had the design of the play worked out mentally. The half-curtain was eliminated and there were three pillars on the stage which were on wheels. Thus, Nath explained the actors and the Sutradhar could manipulate the movement of the pillars to create whatever pattern they wanted. With the pillars, they could also create the half-curtain, where people die, or disappear or enter.

Nath reiterated that Hayavadana should not be taken as a play written in the folk tradition. It is an extremely sophisticated and modern play where some folk elements like masks may be used. Nath said that if a director wishes to have a horse on the stage, then he must have a mask in order to indicate that here is an actor wearing a mask. Nath said that one can make a very interesting and dramatic use of two dolls and he said that he thought that they did not represent the folk tradition at all. In fact, they belong to a very modern tradition. Except for the singer and the Sutradhar, Nath said that he did not find any other folk element even though these too are being used in most of the modern plays.

Nath says that it was his challenge to prove that Hayavadana was not a folk play and he thought that he had done it. But Girish Karnad had not seen his production or any of his other plays.

The next speaker, Satyadev Dubey began by saying that unlike his counterparts in Delhi and Calcutta, he never did a play unless he was the first one to get the script. Referring to G P Deshpande's play *Uddhaswata Dharmashala*, Dubey said that he had spent a lot of time with Deshpande while he was writing the script and when the production was finalized it was read at his workshop but unfortunately he never got a copy. Shyamanand Jalan jokingly said that the playwright tried to save their plays from him because if Dubey got the script, he would change it so much that it would not remain their script any longer.

Dubey continued to describe how he began his production. After Karnad had asked Karanth to translate the play, the translated manuscript was sent to Dubey by Karanth. Dubey got copies of the play circulated all over India and while directors were getting ready to do the play, Dubey managed to stage his production two days before Karanth did it.

Describing some more details about how he began his production, Dubey said that he kept the actors reading the play for five or six months and Dubey admitted that he had no idea as to how he was going to do the play. Then one day, Vijay Tendulkar visited him to see some rehearsals. Having nothing concrete to show him, Dubey told Amol Palekar to stand at a particular place doing certain gestures and asked Amrish Puri to keep running behind him and the first scene was set and it worked. Dubey said that the play went on to become history in Bombay with some lovely music.

Dubey said that everybody in town had praises for the play but they also said that Dubey had added so many things and ruined it, while Girish had to go round before refuting that it was not Dubey, but Girish himself. Dubey said that he hated masks, because he could not afford them and moreover he wanted the faces of his actors to be seen. While trying to solve this it had suddenly occurred to him that he could change their costumes.

He said that the idea of changing costumes worked like magic. Fortunately Amol and Amrish were of the same height and that it was one of Amrish's most magnificent performances. Speaking about his interest in reading texts Dubey said, he might not have committed adultery but he was not shy of it. Having read English Literature, he said that "most of the best things have to do with adultery and Girish seems to be a master of adultery in writing in theatre."

Thiyam then asked Karnad that did he know that Hayavadana has been done in Manipur and has failed miserably. Karnad said he only knew that there was a translation, to which Thiyam replied that the play had failed because the production was directed by a board of directors!

Dubey continuing with some more details of the production said that the scene where Padmini comes and meets the revitalized couple was a moving scene in which the eroticism had worked well. Dubey said that he had one stool as a stage prop, while his costumes were taken from a Marathi production. He made one thing clear that as a director he had always made use of the basics and they always worked. Physically, Dubey explained was an element that had come naturally to him and in retrospect he could feel that the scarcity which he had experienced in life had helped him. He said that while he could not make use of the facilities offered to him by the National School of Drama.

Dubey clarified that as a director he concentrated on two elements – the character and the text. Referring to his habit of wanting to change the text of the play, Dubey said that this has been his constant practice and having read the text, he would ask the writer that if he had read the text correctly, why he can't add a few more lines. He said, "This is not an arrogant position. This is a very logical position. I have never done production of plays. I have produced the plays."



At the same time Dubey pointed out that he had survived for so long because of the playwright and that his surrender to them was total.

Explaining his stance further, Dubey said that Chetan Datar, the playwright of *Savlya* which Dubey had directed was a part of his workshop when he re-wrote the play thrice and the last scene three days before the show. The original play was a Marathi production which had an elaborate set. Dubey, in wanting to change it to Hindi had to affect a lot of changes including the set, which was a portable one. When the play was re-written, certain emphasis had changed and certain new things had emerged.

Dubey however made it clear that in spite of everything, he had always taken a second position to the playwright, even in the advertisement. This was because of the new plays that are being published, with a lot of freshness and new ideas emerging out of them.

When asked by moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay to respond Karnad said that he would like Mahesh Elkunchwar to react because Mahesh had expressed his reservations about *Hayavadana* running in Nagpur. Though Mahesh denied having said anything like that, he said that *Hayavadana* was done in Nagpur and that it was a terrible production. But Mahesh clarified that his reservations about *Hayavadana* were based on a different ground altogether. He explained that his understanding of *Hayavadana* was probably circumscribed by his inability to respond to folk. Mahesh clearly said, “I can’t respond to folk. I have my reservations about it and I have made it public.” Regarding *Hayavadana* Mahesh said that he felt that the play crumbled in the last few moments because all his sympathies were with Padmini, Devadatta and Kapil. Elkunchwar clarified that once Padmini’s problem was resolved; his interest in the play had also disappeared. ‘I don’t remain with the play anymore.’ He said.

Comparing *Hayavadana* with *Tughlaq* – Mahesh said that he considered the latter as one of the best plays he had ever read. Structurally *Tughlaq* is impregnable, it is a beautifully structured play, and it is a model. Mahesh continued that he had reservations about the structure of *Hayavadana*, because two stories are interwoven and they work beautifully for some time and later on they don’t.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala, who had acted in Rajindar Nath’s production of *Hayavadana*, shared his experience as an actor in the play. He said that some of their reservations (including that of Yama Shroff’s, who was also in the play) were solved after they saw Satyadev Dubey’s production. Sheo Kumar was enacting the role of Devadatta and for him it was a torture to do the role. They had 20 shows at Kala Mandir. Structurally he had found the play weak and when he spoke his best lines, he found the audience laughing which made him feel uncomfortable.

But Sheo clarified that after seeing Dubey’s production, he had realized that *Hayavadana* was not a serious play and it was meant to be played in a comical manner. With Amol Palekar as Devadatta in Dubey’s production, it was a totally different portraiture, with serious issues emerging comically.

Taking the issue further, Sheo added another dimension saying that the panellists have been discussing a lot about the need for re-writing a play and in the same way there could be some discussions about the production also, which might go wrong because of not being able to change or interpret the text correctly.

Mahesh Elkunchwar said that he wished to make one of his secret ambitions public and narrated how he, after reading Karnad's play *Tughlaq*, was toying with the idea of writing a play on Samrat Asoka only to realize that it was Girish's material and not his.

For Swarn Chowdhury, *Tughlaq* was a perennial play because in the play one could see history repeating itself, again and again.

Jalan said that he had never attempted *Hayavadana*, but he was always drawn towards the play. He went on to explain that *Hayavadana* had been playing on his mind so much that ultimately he had used the dolls for his television serial *Krishna Kanter Will*. The doll motif Shyamanand explained ran from the beginning to the end.

Responding to the use of the doll motif, Karnad said that dolls have other progenies as well. For example, in Sai Paranjpe's play *Jaswandi* cats sit and talk. Karnad was delighted to see its use and had complimented Sai on using it. Regarding his idea about folk theatre, Karnad explained that even before he wrote *Hayavadana*, Sangeet Natak Akademi were having a lot of arguments as to whether one should go back to one's traditional theatre and use those techniques to write a play. But Karnad explained that other than Tendulkar using the 'tamasha' form, the idea did not have an impact, Karnad said that the only impact he remembered was Gujarati production of Shanta Gandhi's *Jasma Odan*. It was a traditional play, done traditionally and was a great success.

Moving on to *Hayavadana*, Karnad said that Suresh Awasthi and Nemi Chandra Jain, the two champions of folk theatre had branded *Hayavadana* as folk theatre on the basis of the use of the curtain, which according to them was like a Yakshagana curtain.

Karnad explained that he had argued with Karanth endlessly about the way folk elements could be used in theatre. Once Karanth had told him the story of 'transposed heads' and he thought that it was a good material for films. But Karanth had thought otherwise: 'It is not a film; it is a very good play' and I said, 'you are quite right.'

The play was taking shape when Karnad had thought of using masks to transpose the heads. But he admitted that as soon as he saw Satyadev Dubey's production, Karnad knew he was wrong. He then decided on framing a story which had a head that did not match a body. Without keeping the story on an animal or a human level, Karnad thought of Ganesha and the story evolved round it. This made Karnad feel that if he was going to use Ganesha, he would use the whole of Bhagwat to justify it. Summing up the frame work, Karnad said that he did not begin with folk

theatre, he began the main story of the head not matching the body and then went on to Hayavadana and then to Ganesha.

Karnad reminisces that when Satyadev Dubey heard about the play, he wanted to see Arvind Deshpande doing the role. He also recalled the several discussions that had taken place between Dubey, Karanth and himself. He said that at one point Karnad had pointed out that Hayavadana says that he has become a horse, but not a complete horse because his voice is still human.

Dubey wanted to do *Hayavadana* and Karnad felt happy at the thought that the theatre fraternity enjoyed a wonderful camaraderie. He said ‘we kept on interacting and I think one of the great things for my generation was the closeness with which one worked both with other playwrights like Badal Sircar and Tendulkar and also with other directors.’ Speaking about the ending of *Hayavadana* Karnad said that while some thought that the play was meant to be a comedy, many were unhappy with the ending. He said that Vijaya Mehta, in her production of the play, barely had the ending.

Moving on to a different aspect, Mahesh asked Karnad to clarify his stance made in an interview when Girish had said that when he wrote the plays, he did not express himself. He had said that he had a story to be narrated and Girish made use of theatrical terms to tell the story.

Girish said that what he had said was correct and when he was excited by a story and wanted to express it, he would make use of his theatrical elements to express them, which are a part of himself. He clarified that he was not good at cooking fresh tales at all.

Elkunchwar had another question for Karnad. He asked that as a writer didn’t he feel the urge to express himself or to make a personal statement?

Karnad replied that he nursed stories for very many years – like *The Fire and the Rain* which was discussed and kept within for about 30 years. He tended to nurse those themes till they became his own. At the same time, Karnad spoke about the obsession with many theatre directors wanting to do folk theatre and the theatrical problems related to it. He pointed out that at one point of time the folk theatre business got blown out of proportion because both Nemi Chandra Jain and Suresh Awasthi, who was the SNA secretary, were fighting battles that preceded *Hayavadana* by many years.

The theatrical aspects and problems of doing folk theatre were discussed at many seminars. A series of plays, which handled the problems followed – *Jo Kumara swamicame* immediately after *Hayavadana* followed by *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Karnad said that Tendulkar had seen Dubey’s production and he had expressed his desire to deal with folk theatre to Karnad. But Tendulkar had made it clear that his techniques would be different. Karnad continued to explain that after 3 or 4 years came Habib Tanvir’s *Charandas Chor*, which according to Karnad was the real folk theatre in which he had worked with the folk artists coming into a wider arena.

Pointing out the distinction which was to be made between playwrights like Chandrasekhar Kambar, who hailed from a folk background and Tendulkar or himself, Karnad said, that they did not belong to those traditions and though Tendulkar claimed that he wrote *Dash avatar*, Karnad said that he had doubts as to what extent it had been faithful to the original.

Karnad made himself clear when he said that his act had been to put together elements which he thought were essential for the particular story. He pointed out that the fairy tale elements in Shakespeare play like 'A Mid-summer Night's Dream' or A Winter's Tale had always fascinated him.

Karnad agreed with Samik Bandyopadhyay to say that the fairy-tale elements were present in *Hayavadana* and also in *Nagamandala*. Karnad shared an anecdote to describe how Dubey after reading *Nagamandala* had called it 'aweful' and then had suggested to Karnad that the 'flavour' used in the first five minutes of the play as the prologue should have been scattered throughout the play. Karnad admitted that he had taken Dubey's suggestion and re-written the play. He called it the advantage of working with the reaction of others.

He said that though he did not wish to compare productions, he did wish to make a comment on Karanth's production as against Satyadev Dubey's production. Karnad said that Karanth's production had a lot of colour, a lot of movements and at the end there was tremendous effect of the musical elements. But, in spite of all these, none of the characters had emerged. He said that thinking back he cannot remember who played Devadatta or who played Kapil, because they were all replaceable. There was a celebration of colour and music which became quite an experience for the Kannada audience and also for the Hindi audience when it was done in Delhi.

As against this, Karnad continued that he and perhaps everybody remembered Kapil, Devadatta and Padmini in Dubey's production. Karnad said that Amol Palekar started his film carrier from the play when Basu Chatterjee spotted him there. Amrish Puri was excellent and so was Sunila Pradhan. The psychology of the characters came across very well and a logical psychology came through in Dubey's production, which was absent in Karanth's. Karnad commented that Karanth gave so much importance to colour and movement that he often lost sight of the necessity of projecting the psychology of the characters. He said that Karanth's production had a bad impact on Kannada theatre. Explaining this Karnad said, "Because people have learnt how to use music and movement to fill in their weakness as playwright....when you don't know what to do, have a song."

Dubey took the discussion of folk theatre further to describe how Karanth had become popular in the Hindi speaking areas with his productions of *King Lear* or *Macbeth* etc. by making use of folk elements. But Dubey's question was that how could Karanth who was not familiar with English as a language handle a play like *King Lear*? Did Karanth make use of the Yakshagana style or was it the Shakespearean style, he questioned? Dubey recalled that he had this question

for Suresh Awasthi who had no answer. But Dubey commented that the story of King Lear is not Shakespeare's so a Yakshagana style could be used.

Dubey recounted that by the time Karanth produced Macbeth he was nearer to Shakespeare, with a better translation, where some Yakshagana had been used and in some places the folk element became important. But Dubey lamented that gradually the process kept on getting missed out in theatre, with the content and the story element getting thinner.

Speaking about another play based on folk elements 'Ghashiram Kotwal', Dubey said that it was a perfectly valid theatre experience and one of the best theatre experiences one has had, but the content had diminished.

Dubey pointed out that this has led playwrights who come with content face difficulties because people have been finding these plays very wordy. Dubey questioned that why shouldn't a play be wordy? He said that since theatre had started it has been wordy and it had been his dreams to have his actors speak fifty lines at a stretch.

Karnad described the productions of *Hayavadana* by two different directors and adding some more facts to Karnad's observations Dubey said that his production of *Hayavadana* had about 14 songs. It had some very lovely music, which he had integrated within the play and it was never noticed separately. Though people hummed a few popular lines, they never called it music.

Referring to the folk movement that took place in the early sixties, Shyamanand Jalan said that many directors (particularly Dubey) have felt drawn to the cinema and with it came the question as to how to survive in theatre. Jalan said that for a playwright it was easier to write a play, but for the directors, managers or organisers it was a difficult search to become popular, to become acceptable to people, who would come and purchase tickets to watch a play. Jalan said that 'one of the reasons why it was felt in the early 60s when the entire folk movement came up at one level that this whole Western theatre is alien to us.....and the plays which are coming up are structured on Western aesthetics.....so one must travel to the Indian roots to become acceptable to the masses.'

Jalan clarified that the fascination about folk which, had started at the end of the 60s was not nationalistic from that point of view – it was an effect to solve a problem, which was to draw the people to the theatre. Karnad agreed with Shyamanand and said that his plays which have had

the target number of shows have been the ones with music. He had done *Yayati*, but *Hayavadana* had been a runaway success. Even 10 years later, when it was done again by Vijaya Mehta in Marathi, the play was as successful.

Referring to *Yayati*, Dubey said that the production was stopped and he was to take the blame since there were a lot of misunderstandings between him and the organization (INT). Dubey said that he believed that organizations will have to live with the fact that they will get secondary importance and the focus will always be on the creative people. He said that he believed that if India has to have a theatre, it is not going to be made up of the sponsors, or the people with money bags or the government. But it has to be the individual. Dubey explained that therefore now more and more groups in Gujarat and Maharashtra (irrespective of their quality) have been flourishing well. Giving an example of how an individual can work wonders – Dubey cited the example of Sarita Khatau (Sarita Joshi), who was literally thrown out of INT. Sarita however had emerged as a star, doing her own plays and making a lot of money, being the highest paid actress in Gujarati theatre.

The point that Dubey insisted on was that it is the creative people who mattered whereas in organizations like National Centre for Performing Arts – the theatre scene had not shown any signs of improvement at all. Dubey argued in the regular theatre, where professional theatres are staged, with people paying for their seats, the plays get a house full show. Dubey gave an example of Shafi Inamdar's play 'All the best' at Tejpal which had been a runaway success and how he had seen people booking their seats in advance to see the play. But the situation was different in the Prithvi Theatres where he had found people disrespectful and where seeing a play is often an obligation.

Jalan comments on the same theme and remarked that in commercial theatre which was becoming popular, the names of the actors are well remembered, whereas in the non-commercial theatre, one remembers the directors or the playwright.

Adding on to Shyamanand's comment Dubey said that Amrish Puri had been in theatre for 30 long years and is yet known as a film actor. Dubey said this hurt them a lot because he felt that Amrish has given magnificent performance compared to any other actor. Dubey said that the scene was the same in Gujarati or Marathi theatre where persons like Shafi Inamdar who had a major financial success or Sarita Joshi were controlling the scene. When Jalan said that one

person was an actor, Dubey disagreed to say that it can be a producer like Mohan Tondwalker as well.

Waman Kendre however said that in Bombay it was the producer or the manager who ruled the theatre and that there was no role for the directors, actor or writer in a play. This was also true of the Gujarati or the English theatre.

Dubey clarified that for a production to run smoothly it was necessary to have a producer who would know business management. He said that there should be one person to control. If the director is not strong enough, it is for the producer to choose a particular director and check the commercial possibilities. The difficulty arises when the producer tries to impose himself on others.

Summing up the proceedings, moderator Samik Bandyopadhyay said that Dubey had made one very important point that whatever decision, whatever trends, whatever development take place in theatre they should come from individual minds and individual imagination. He said that what had happened in the late 60s and early 70s was that even this new reading of the folk theatre, the need to revive folk theatre, the need to take theatre to the roots etc. was an institutional decision being imposed from the top. Suresh Awasthi and Nemi Chandra Jain were the propagators and the spokesmen of a massive organizational project. In the process, Samik added, some dangerous things happened and looking closely at the development of the Indian Theatre, of the different trends etc. the whole thing has become a very over-simplified reading of Indian theatre where one makes two different categories of Western and Indian theatre. Indian theatre means that it was to be loose with a lot of music put in and whenever it is structured with a systematic mode with a rich text, it becomes Western.

Samik pointed out that Indian theatre was being subjected to a lot of misreading and over-simplification and it was an 'unhistorical' attempt to do so. Victorian melodrama which was very musicalised and very episodic came back in its worst manifestations through the Parsee theatre and then got into Hindi cinema. Samik explained that unfortunately this was being re-read as the grand great Indian tradition. This idea was being institutionally constructed and this had created a lot of confusion.

At the same time, Bandyopadhyay suggested that if somebody like Habib, Panikkar or Karanth went back and really knew his tradition and made something out of it - it would become very different with unique thoughts and elements emerging. Samik clearly said *Jo Kumar Swami* was very different from *Hayavadana* and there was no point in putting all these plays in the same bracket.

Speaking about his experience in a round table seminar called “The Contemporary Relevance of the Traditional Theatre in India in 1971” Samik said that the seminar had been organized

by the Sangeet Natak Akademi but nothing really emerged from the discussions and everyone was disgusted. But Samik added that they had thoroughly enjoyed Girish Karnad reading the half of his English translation of *Hayavadana* over an informal get-together and dinner. This was followed by Karanth singing a few songs and another major and very interesting item was Dubey’s act, which Samik called ‘a masterly act’ in which he recited the Gandhari speech from *Andha Yug* and addressed it to Ibrahim Alkazi. In this speech, Dubey cursed Alkazi saying that he would ultimately turn into Adi Marzban. Samik said that he would never forget the wonderful performance that was done in the presence of P L Deshpande, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Utpal Dutt and others. He also recalled how P L Deshpande performed a whole story in about 15 or 20 minutes – a love story with its disappointments, tensions, all in music, using only the ‘sargam’. Prior to this the playwrights present had been discussing about the issue that a lot of their plays were being staged by people, without paying any fees to the playwrights. Deshpande, while performing his short play said, ‘here is a play I have written to resist and fight this and nobody can pick this play up and not pay us royalty because it doesn’t have any words.’

Samik re-iterated the fact that it was their duty to do away with the Western element and be Indian. He recalled that it had been a dreadful situation and now they are free enough to laugh at it and laugh about it. This was because they had history on their side: ‘because the more we get into history, we discover that there has been everything in the Indian tradition.’ So there need not be anything Western or Indian, there can be any kind of mixes. Giving an example of this blend, Samik referred to Girish Karnad where the Yakshagana bit on the curtain is only incidental and grows of his concern that begins with the play.

Before ending the pre-lunch session Dubey referred to P L Deshpande’s compositions and said that he asked Deshpande several times to do it on stage. It was lovely idea, a sort of Sargam opera, but it was never done.



Referring to the question of royalty Dubey said that he had a fight with Mohan Rakesh when he tried to convince him that if one is a part of a theatre movement, one should not look for royalties. But if there is any payment that is made the playwright will be paid. But if he demanded royalty as a right, then in that case he should sell his play to the person who wanted to buy it.

At the same time Dubey questioned that since it was supposed to be a movement, why has the money only got to go to the writer alone? What about the actors and the director and all this rentals he asked. Dubey said that if the playwright has the rights, it is his property and if he wishes to sell it, someone has to pay for it. He explained 'if you want to be part of this movement then you cannot claim it as a moral right.' There has to be a distinction between property rights and normal rights, he said.