



NATYA SHODH SANSTHAN

DISCUSSION ON HINDI THEATRE
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THE PRESENT SCENARIO OF HINDI THEATRE IN CALCUTTA

ON

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AT NATYA SHODH SANSTHAN

PARTICIPANTS

PRATIBHA AGRAWAL, SAMIK BANDYOPADHYAY,
SHIV KUMAR JOSHI, SHYAMANAND JALAN,
MANAMOHON THAKORE SHEO KUMAR JHUNJHUNWALA,
SWRAN CHOWDHURY, TAPAS SEN, BIMAL LATH,
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Pratibha Agrawal

We are recording the discussion on “The present scenario of the Hindi Theatre in Calcutta”. The participants include – Kishen Kumar, Shymanand Jalan, Shiv Kumar Joshi, Shiv Kumar Jhunjhunwala, Manamohan Thakore¹, Samik Banerjee, Dharani Ghosh, Usha Ganguly² and Bimal Lath. We welcome all of you on behalf of Natya Shodh Sansthan. For quite some time we, the actors, directors, critics and the members of the audience have been appreciating and at the same time complaining about the plays that are being staged in Calcutta in the languages that are being practiced in Calcutta, be it in Hindi, English, Bangla or any other language. We felt that if we, the practitioners should sit down and talk about the various issues that are bothering us, we may be able to solve some of the problems and several issues may be resolved. Often it so happens that the artists take one side and the critics-audience occupies the other. There is a clear division – one group which creates and the other who criticizes. Many a time this proves to be useful and necessary as well. So we felt that if we, the actors, directors, critics and audience sit together and discuss in an amicable atmosphere, it may be helpful to us in future and may guide us to some extent. As an outcome of that idea, today’s Seminar has been organized by Natya Shodh Sansthan keeping Hindi as the centre. We are not drawing any sort of line for the purpose of the discussion because we will be crossing the dividing line often to substantiate our points. However, we may broadly fix up post-independence period as generally we will be talking about these three decades of theatre, which will be but natural. We are sorry that Renu Roy and Usha Ganguly are not able to participate in today’s





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deliberations due to some personal problems and Kishen Kumar ji had gone out of station. However, Shymanand Jalan, Shiv kumar Joshi, Shiv Kumar Jhunjhunwala and Bimal Lath are present representing the creators and Manamohan Thakore, Shiv Kumar Joshi and Samik Bandyopadhyay are with us this morning as representatives of the critic-audience group. Though Shiv Kumar Joshi is associated with Calcutta theatre primarily as an actor and director, he has been an observant critic as well. Some time back, someone said – “The swords are going to be out of their covers today, people will be slashing at each other.” We hope that we are going to have a frank and fruitful discussion in next two hours and expect to find a genuine effort to work for a healthy atmosphere in this important area of creation. Personal references are bound to come up from time to time but, I am sure they will be taken as an example and not personal aspersions on any one. Now I request Samik Bandyopadhyay, to initiate the proceedings of the seminar.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

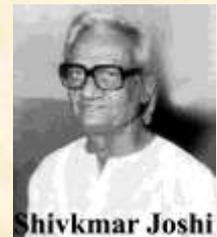
As per our discussion, we will not be taking too long a span for today’s discussion. I suggest limiting it to 5 years because as we have seen, people start talking about their experiences of last 10 years-15 years and it never ends. It may also be not of much value to hear repeatedly that in earlier days the things used to be done that way and the earlier theatre was much better



in comparison to today's. So, we will try to analyze the Calcutta theatre scenario of the last 5 years only. We also thought that it may be a good idea if the critics present a sort of survey of the Calcutta theatre in the last 5 years as they have found it to be because all of us have been feeling that all the three languages in theatre i.e. Hindi, English and Bangla, have become weaker from the point of view of creativity. The general scenario of all the theatres is almost the same, at least in Calcutta. We will take up these three languages separately because all of these have some common issues as well as some special problems which need separate attention. We have planned to begin with Hindi today which will be followed by Bangla and English in due course. In the beginning we would like the panelists to talk about the general issues and request the critics to pinpoint the areas in which, according to them, in the last 5 years the theatre level has come down, in this field it has failed, it is not reaching the audience and theatre has not been able to maintain its special features or its basic tone (Sur). If need be, they can refer to certain productions but a bare reference at a superficial level will not convey much. We are all mature people and I am sure, any reference to any person or a play will be taken as an example and not as a personal attack. First, I request Shri Shiv Kumar Joshi to put his point of view, Shiv Kumar Joshi

Shiv kumar Joshi

My first reaction is that none of the producers have a definite goal as to actually what they want to reach at. The entire phenomenon seems to be very haphazard. Now what they are trying is that they are taking some successful plays from here and there and...I think we are in two minds whether we should look at the audience or should we try out what has been done in Bengali theatre by Bohurupee or by Badal Sircar³. Hindi theatre in



Shiv Kumar Joshi



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Calcutta seems to be in a pandemonium. They are not able to decide about their line of action. So, my first question would be....similar situation exists in Gujarati Theater in Bombay and Ahmadabad. Why I am referring to that because they too are passing through the same phase. Some of them have compromised with the attitude of the audience. This is how the audience wants and as such they are preparing their production to cater to the bigger and bigger audiences. On the other side in Ahmadabad, there is the experimental theatre that is going on and some of them are no doubt doing very serious work. They are quite earnest about it but they borrow their ideas not from experiments that are being carried out by Badal Sircar or Habib Tanvir⁴ or some other Indian producer, but from the western theatre. So I want to know the views of our Indian producers particularly the directors – three of them are sitting here – “Are you sure of your goal where you want to lead the Hindi Theatre? And Calcutta being a place of 3 or 4 million Hindi speaking people or Hindi knowing people – let us put it this way. Bombay is also having the same type of situation with 2 million Gujarati speaking or Gujarati knowing people and the way they cater to those audiences. Can we think in those terms? Cater to the audience and try to produce a very polished type of play? I am using the word ‘polished’ deliberately. Their emphasis is on a polished play that means a very good production, a well-designed, well decorated set, very good lighting and all that. They try to be perfect in all the small details. And it is designed to attract the Gujarati audience in large numbers. There are at least 15 to 20 theatre halls in Bombay engaged on every Saturday and Sunday doing at least two shows. And all of them find the audience. The rates of tickets are also not less than Rs. 10, upper limit is Rs. 25. In spite of this high rate they get the audience. Their theory is - cater to the masses, the cross section of the society, they will come. Even those who cannot afford 25 rupees will join the gate-crash. Now, what is our attitude in Calcutta? Of course, I am giving figures at random, they may not be correct, but we know that a big number of people understand Hindi even though their mother tongues may not be Hindi. What is your idea about bringing that crowd to theatre? Has any effort been made in that direction in the last five years? These are my queries and a hope that the three directors who are sitting here will comment on this.

Shyamanand Jalan⁵

Actually, I think what Samik said was something different. Samik said – let the critics evaluate the works of the last five years and define the trends and the questions arising out of these trends. That would have been a very fitting start to the discussion straight away.

Manomohan Thakore

This was exactly what I was feeling. I was also feeling that probably Shiv Kumar Bhai is referring to himself as an outsider and putting certain question to the producers of the groups here as he himself is a very competent playwright and director in Hindi. Personally I feel that in Calcutta, a very interesting phenomenon has emerged as far as Hindi theatre is concerned. It is probably ten years back or may be more, when Anamika started its regular shows scheme or it was perhaps much earlier shows. So we had to withdraw the play after two shows only. Now we are forced to calculate right from the beginning as to how many call shows may be expected for this play or how many call shows must be arranged for this play



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to meet the expenses. I am remembering one other play, though it is out of the five year's limit put by Samik. It has to be an arbitrary limit, but I am still referring to that. The play was 'Caravan Guzar Gaya'⁶. I still think that to be one of the prized plays produced by Adakar. A flop from the view point of the box office because it went above their heads. Now this raises a point. Every time we discuss a point – how far are we going to repeat that a group wants to survive, remaining active you need money to have call shows? The question is theatre or we should always keep in it? How far we should compromise? compromise and see how far we can reluctance is coming in the attitude shows are concerned. Now, sporadic



come down to fortnightly shows – alternate Sundays. A sort of rivalry is also seen as to who gets the Sundays at Kala Mandir basement or Gyan Manch. By that one can expect a better sale of tickets otherwise on Saturdays or Fridays the box-office is gone with the winds. Recently a play like 'Kamala'⁷ was produced, a big play. I was told, I may be wrong; the sale on first two days was Rs. 1300 only, very poor for a play like 'Kamala', well produced great play. I want to juxtapose another point with this - It is true that because of these efforts on the part of the theatre groups, a drama consciousness has developed in the people. This is what our goal was. But for the last two months since Pallavi Mehta has shifted to Bombay, no new play has been taken up. People have started asking – what is the matter? Why Adakar is silent. When is the new play coming up? That means people want you to produce plays, they want to see a play, only when they receive an invitation to watch the play. This is a big malady. I remember in the seminar in 1964, which was organized by Anamika, these points were raised. People do not want to buy the ticket to see a drama. Now the position is changing. There has developed a group of people which spends money to see a play. It is quite sizable now. Another interesting feature of the last 5 years which has drawn my attention is that you raise the price of the tickets of the front one or two rows, people pay for that gladly. They get filled up first. It is priced high so it becomes prized and becomes a sort of status symbol also. Rest of the hall may remain empty. I want to come back to the original point. I know, I have taken a lot of time and I should wind up now. We have to decide...time has come for all the groups to decide whether they would compromise on the quality of the production because of the poor box-office or not? That is the point I want to make.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

I will raise a few questions and then I will hand over to the three directors to answer. The way I see the situation in the last 5 years, the compromises have been made in all the three theatres that I have seen fairly closely – English, Bangla and Hindi appears to me is that the strength of theatre – all the three theatres had been very traditional for a very long time with solid psychological acting. Plays were chosen also with this consideration where there were



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roles which could be acted out emotionally with strength, with depth, with insight. And the entire production was planned and conceived in a manner so that it supported and clarified and underlined the emotional, psychological stresses, strains, tensions powerfully. So the entire production was geared to this point and this was the level on which in the fifties, in sixties and in early seventies, English, Bangla, and Hindi theatre in Calcutta achieved their best success. If you think of the major productions which people still talk about, they are all productions which are remembered because of the psychological complexity at its heart and how actors worked it through and how it was very well planned out, blocked, supported design wise, light wise by the whole production but highlighting and underlining that aspect. Somehow what I think has happened is that there has been a basic decline in simple acting skills, capacity, understanding the characters in a role. This actually started earlier but I will not go back since I have been warned that we shouldn't go back. But what has happened is that since we have also willingly realized that we don't have actors who can really go into a character and make a play alive so we decided to choose other extraneous factors to sustain the play, to make a theatre out of it.

Manamohan Thakore

For example?

Samik Bandyopadhyay

For example – I think the whole thing began in a way in the sixties with Nandikar's ⁸ Tin Poyshar Pala⁹, which you remember seriously, may be even the choice of Brecht,¹⁰ was determined to a certain extent, from a very false, over simplified understanding of Brecht. Because Brecht says that he is not interested in the psychological treatment of characters. He is interested in using the entire situation as a piece of history, as a part, as a symbol of the process of change. So, here is a playwright whom we can take up where you don't have to have acting skill as such, where you don't have to have a psychological interpretation, probing into a character. This is a wholly wrong approach to Brecht but this is the thing probably which drew us to Brecht initially. So you can bring in lots of ingredients which don't demand acting – psychological acting I mean and make theatre out of that. May be that was the beginning. Then there were other off shoots in various directions but I am not going into that. So, what happened, we lost our actors. Really in the last five years, I can't cite either in Bengali or in Hindi or in English theatre a single new actor, a single new actress who had emerged, which in the sixties or the seventies or in the early seventies was quite a usual thing. Almost every year, at the end of the year, we could say, well, there have been three or four good productions and at least four or five new actresses and actors that have emerged. We didn't have really much growth or much new talent emerging in the field of stage lighting or stage designing. We had good old Tapasbabu¹¹ and Khaled da¹² for ages. But what have happened in the last few years there are more theatre technicians, may be not their range and their imagination, but more people have emerged, you can name individuals. But it is very difficult to name a striking actress who has the range, who can be expected to... So the choice of the plays has also shifted more to spectacles or performance as opposed to rich theatre and our entire failure with Brecht is also probably related to this because we



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took Brecht for the wrong reason. This I think has been the common feature at one level – one of the problems. So people have gone, the directors have gone for various other things – for a show, trying to bring in the traditional forms into theatre, traditional dance forms into theatre. Not doing theatre for theatre's sake but doing theatre so that theatre can be a peg, theatre can be a frame, within which you can plant something from outside and make it interesting because they don't have a play which can be interpreted, built, elaborated. I am not suggesting in the least that the other theatrical forms or traditions do not have good theatres. There are theatres, excellent theatres and rich theatres in the world which do not depend on the psychological theatre. But we have not built these traditions in our country. We don't have yet a single director who is capable of doing theatre totally in a rich and ornamental scale which is non-psychological, non-script theatre which is exciting, which have opened up new avenues but we haven't really reached in that theatre. So our theatre, two hundred years of tradition in the Marathi Theatre, the Bengali theatre and from the Marathi and the Bengali what went into making of Hindi theatre, these traditions belong to the solid European and American nineteenth century tradition which is a tradition of psychological theatre. So, this is the thing that we have lost. Our audiences have also started going off because they are used to that kind of theatre. Even now, in the rest of India, when, for example, Manomohan Thakore says that 'Barrister' has failed in Calcutta, I hadn't seen the play. I didn't know that it was 'Barrister'. But I saw this play in Bombay only two months back and I was over-powered. I think, even by the modern standards of dramaturgy etc, I didn't find it a great play but it is wonderful theatre and it brings you into a psychological problem.

Manamohan Thakore

My complain to you critics are, that you wait for the very last show and then come to see. You never come early.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

No, may be the reason is, if you ask me frankly, I feel so depressed about it because in the past, in the fifties and the sixties, I had been a regular theatergoer. I loved seeing two or three plays every week which I know now that every play I go to it is so depressing, so frustrating, it is so bad.

Manamohan Thakore

Feel more frustrated but please see the plays.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

What right has you to demand that I waste two or three hours of my evening...?

Shiv Kumar Jhunjhunwala

In what way have you wasted your time in last 4-5 years? You are here as a critic and I am as a director. How many Hindi plays have you seen in the last five years? I know, you have not seen a single play directed by me. How are you going to visualize, how are you going to rectify them (the mistakes)? Your presence here is nullified; it is irrelevant because you haven't seen theatre in the last five years. You should not be here in this position. You should be sitting there (pointing towards the audience).....



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Samik Bandyopadhyay

OK. I will remove myself from here. (Laughter)

Shyamanand Jalan

I severely protest against this kind of statement. Let's be a little cool for discussion on the subject in hand.

Manamohan Thakore

Let the talks continue.

Pratibha Agrawal

Yes, the talk should continue.

Manamohan Thakore

But if it is true that he hasn't seen any of his plays then it has been unfair.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala¹³



Not that, but by that the importance of his talk is reduced. The people who are going to talk about his plays, if they haven't seen the plays, then my opinion, what will be the value of what they say? One should know that also. If a person, who is going to talk about my productions, hasn't seen them, then what importance will I give to his views? If today we have gathered here to discuss, to understand, to decide as to what course Hindi theatre has to take in future, then the views of only those people will be meaningful and useful for us who have seen our theatre. May be that my way of putting a thing is not as diplomatic as Shyam Bhaia. I have never been diplomatic in my life. This thing has often come before me, people have criticized me. I have been isolated but I have never been diplomatic. This may be my weakness or my strength. But today the question is that how can I give importance to the views of those who haven't seen my plays. Now, if I am expected to come here, listen to what others say and leave the place in the end after saying bye-bye to everybody, then I don't have to say anything.

Manamohan Thakore

Now even today, while reviewing a play of today, you are reminded of 'Evam Indrajit'¹⁴. I would say, the play does not carry any relevance today.

Shyamanand Jalan

In this, there are two sides of the question. I feel that what is being said by both Shiv Kumar and Thakore Sahab have got truth in them. Today, I go and see two plays of Nandikar, see two English plays and try to find out the trend in them. One may find some common trend in them and then the theater goer waits for something new to come which he may go and see. The production may be that of Shyamanand or Shiv Kumar Jhunjhunwala or Bimal Lath or Kishen Kumar, people start having some expectation from theatre. As a result, the enlightened intellectual theater goers feel themselves cut off from the others, perhaps. And then we start talking about the basic trends as to what is happening at the moment. Is there something that can give some food to ponder over to the intellectual critics of another language so that they come to see the play? Today like to draw your attention to one factor. If





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there are only two or three plays produced in a year, one is enthusiastic to go and see them. In Hindi, nowadays, there is at least one new play staged every month in Calcutta. There are on an average, 10 to 12 new plays every year. I am not trying to defend; I am just trying to bring the subject back on the track. A few main trends are emerging; there is the charge against Samik that he hasn't seen the plays. He may not have seen 2, 3, or 4 of my plays either. He might have come to one or two plays (general laughter). But I would take that as my weakness. I feel that if there would be something important or worthwhile in my play, why would he not come? He would. He will be keen to see, he will buy a ticket and see. If I believe that he is an honest person and does not carry dishonesty in him. If there is dishonesty in him then he should introspect and try to find out where I am wrong. What I am doing is not correct. Or why Tapas Sen would not come to my play at the earliest opportunity after coming back from Delhi or why Khaled da would not come to see my play which he has not been able to see till then? What is that? And I feel it is the loss of the identity for the director, loss of identity for the producer. You used to go to see an actor in the plays of Sombhu da¹⁵? Why? Because you wanted to see the work of an individual which was in itself, different from other works. Just some time back I was reading 'Theatre News'. It is a small bulletin brought out by LTG of New Delhi. There was an interesting thing in that. Delhi is having theatre for almost 15 years yet the trend hasn't developed to name the actors as NSD¹⁶ actors or Rajindernath's¹⁷ actors or he belongs to this school or that school. I was talking to Eugenio Barba¹⁸ recently. He said - my actor will do a particular thing in a particular way. He cannot adjust with any new system. Now, at least I haven't come across a group which works with certain philosophy, certain ideology, certain basics of working and which is also distinctive in itself. What is happening today, you see the plays done by me or Shiv Kumar or Kishen Kumar or Bimal Lath, you will get something in common in them. There are some plays which come up in a different way, in treatment and in various other matters. At present, an actor is today working with me, tomorrow with you, day after with a third person. This situation in Hindi Theatre raises a few questions. Shiv Kumar Bhai (Joshi) raised the question – what is the goal? What do you want to do through theatre? Where are you in the personal evolution in theatre? In 1950, Tapas Sen started working in the field of lighting. Till 1960-65, he gave whatever he had to give and then sat quiet. Now he is designing lights for exhibitions. The evolution has been checked. Now, if we take Shiv Kumar, he talks sense, we discuss basic points, we talk about individuals. If we talk about Bimal, or Usha (Ganguly) or Kumar Roy¹⁹, and ask all these people that how do you analyze your evolution in the last 10 years, what type of plays have you selected for production, what modification have you introduced in the acting style of your group, then this exercise will be an honest and interesting effort to get the true picture...because these are two aspects ofMay I continue?

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Please, go ahead.

Shyamanand Jalan

I will be a little personal. In 1979, we came to a decision that serious theatre cannot be



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pursued by amateurs. I have one more observation. The backbone of Hindi theatre in Calcutta is the amateur theatre. Rudraprasad Sengupta²⁰, Kumar Roy, Sombhu Mitra – all were professionals. Though in a little different way a person, who is professional, is thinking about theatre from morning till evening. He is engaged in a serious work. People may be coming to help him. Some sort of motivating factor has to be there if one wants to do something significant. Otherwise it doesn't work. In Hindi theatre, everybody is engaged in something else the whole day.



Swaran Chowdhury

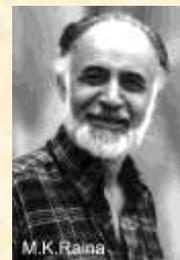
Except Kishen Kumar who is an exception.

Shyamanand Jalan

Yes, Kishen Kumar is there. He has his own limitations. I won't like to talk about that here. Professionalism limits you and also liberates you. Now when I think of today's Hindi Theatre of Calcutta, there is not a single powerful thinking person who is spending his whole day thinking about theatre only. At least there is nobody in Calcutta. This is something very important because creation of art I feel is not my mind but creation of art is a product of one's total personality. If it is a product of personality, what you have been thinking, what you have been talking, what you have been hearing is immaterial. What matters is the atmosphere in which you have lived in, the particular way in which you have been thinking from morning till night. You have been living a life and out of that, your whole life, out of all your experiences you have undergone, something emerges. And for eight or nine hours in the day, in the better part of your working life you are busy doing accounting, you are busy doing some work or other. Bimal Lath has become a successful businessman, I have become a successful solicitor, and Shiv Kumar has become an industrialist. Productions and all these things come from people like us? This was my observation in 1975... This challenge was not there in the sixties. In sixties, there were no professionals in Hindi theatre. They joined in seventies. Now, a play is being done in



Calcutta and you find the name of M. K. Raina²¹ or that of Satyadev Dubey²² as directors. These professionals came and showed a new direction. In that, we amateurs started getting worried. What to do – whether I should go in this way or that? I am not saying this about everybody; I am talking about my case only. When the psychological theatre, as Samik says, has been liquidated in the last ten years, there are reasons for the liquidation of the psychological theatre and coming up of the stylized theatre, but that is a separate subject.



But I felt this in 1979 that the type of theatre I want to do, can be taken to a very limited extent on the strength of the amateurs and not beyond that. It may be a good entertainment for an evening but nothing more than that. I wanted to form a Repertory of committed professional directors, make them direct plays in Calcutta and then gradually take people



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from lower strata, give them some money to start with them and then try to get call shows so that ultimately we can support the unit on the basis of the call shows. If you are able to fetch a lakh or one and a half lakhs a year from call shows, you can cover the basic expenses to some extent. This was going on. In the meantime, Dubey came last year. He did plays. The shows could not be continued because of some problems. They had to be withdrawn after 4-5 shows. Rajit Kapoor came. He did 'Bicchu'²³. It had 50-55 shows. I had fixed a show with one ladies group. I thought we will get five thousand rupees from them and will be able to sustain for two months. It was a comedy, it will continue. But the whole aim behind this was to form a Repertory and get sufficient number of call shows for supporting the repertory. The play was ready in 27 days. M.K. Raina was supposed to come but he didn't come and I was committed for the 27th April show, so I somehow readied the show in 27 days. I regard this good because this brought me face to face with myself and the fact that the direction in which the things are moving is not the right direction.

Pratibha Agrawal

Which play was this?

Shyamanand Jalan

Bibiyon ka Madrasa²⁴. This is not the right direction and this won't serve the purpose. Either you get money, funding. State funding, company funding or trust funding, form a repertory of committed whole timers and work, then it can serve the purpose. If that is not possible, then let us accept our amateurism and let us gloat in our amateurism. I won't go. I won't do call shows. I do theatre here. I do a play every evening. I rehearse every day. I like to do. I do it. The day I won't like to do, I won't do. I am an amateur. I accept my amateurism. I accept this thing still I am linked to theatre. In September 1982, I disbanded the whole group and since then, all these months, we are rehearsing 'Adhey Adhurey'²⁵ with four persons with no guarantee as to when the show will take place. You may call it romanticism, may call it dalliance, but I feel, this is also one way because at least, you have a goal before you towards which you are proceeding. It is a mad race now that how many more shows one is doing. Due to this mad race, in the last three years 1979, 1980 and 1981, we have done 150 shows of our 8 or 9 productions, every 3-4 months Padatik was giving a production. We did more than 150 shows, may be 160 or 170. Then I realized that this is not the right path – whether it is professionalism, you have to worry about the money. Because you depend on it for the daily necessities of life so your idealism, your romanticism





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of theatre has to be limited to a certain extent. When you are an amateur, you can have unlimited romanticism, you can have unlimited idealism, you can have a goal set for yourself and can go ahead. And that I think is the only validity of the amateur theatre, apart from going there in the evening and playing bridge in the club or going to a friend's house for a cup of tea. It is not invalid to me, that am also equally necessary. For somebody, that is necessary, for me doing theatre may be necessary. I gather a few people in the evenings and do that. OK, good, do that. That is not necessary. That is my personal goal, so I will do theatre in a limited sphere. The validity of that sort of theatre is over after the first show or utmost 3-4 shows. After the first three shows what are you doing? If I am trying to become professional and present regular shows, then do my artists have the capability to be professional and run the company? If you look seriously, you will find that no Hindi theatre group has more than 50% artists whom you can keep on salary and make a professional actor-actress out of him or her even in 8 or 10 years? Then where is the mad race? I can tell you about myself. Personally I am enjoying my work. I am not doing any shows. I am enjoying my rehearsals. They are an end in themselves. Or a show may come as by product. We have worked, as amateurs we have worked for some time and now we have achieved something, let us show it. This will be, very honestly, putting it on a higher pedestal. So do it. I have worked for quite some time. Now I want to show to my friends what I have done recently. Let the people comment if they want to do so. Without doing all this, I will become extremely bored. This is one way of looking at the things. To sum up, what Shiv Kumar Bhai said is very correct – what are we doing? What is our goal? If it is a goal of self-expression, expression of our own observations about life, our own observations about society, or to improve the society, that is one valid goal. Let us examine how far we are succeeding in that. Second is to establish some form or something that in itself is a valid exercise. Let us go and do that. Now, Anamika has a big problem. Every Saturday evening or Sunday evening, one is bothered – today this actor is not available, tomorrow that actor is not available. Why Pratibhaji retired from theatre? Somewhere she felt frustrated. For whom are we doing theatre? For those who don't come to the rehearsals and do the shows? Every Friday evening there is the headache – whether he will come today or not, that fellow has not done the rehearsals. How is he going to perform? We need somebody to manage the stage. No discipline. No group of actors. Where are the groups? Every group in the Hindi theatre in Calcutta is not a group. It is an assortment of individuals who have gathered to do one particular show at one particular time, except very few. I am not saying hundred per cent, there are exceptions. That is the bane of Hindi theatre. Over all what Samik is saying, I have to observe only this much that Bengal has the tradition of the actors- dominated theatre who happened to be the directors also. You will find the same in all the groups. From seventies, the actors don't occupy the front seat. Kumar Roy is a director, not a great actor. Rudraprasad Sengupta is a director; he is not a great actor. When this trend started emerging, automatically the psychological aspect, the brilliant acting started going down. Number two in life we have generally become cynical. The moment we become cynical the intellectual values, the thought content is lost somewhere. Idealism has gone away from life. Practicalism



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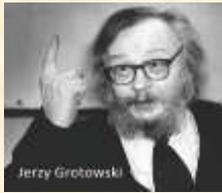
pervades us. This is the state of theatre everywhere. It is my observation. I may be incorrect. Then well informed critics are there, they can see. So you can go back. You have to disburse horizontally and when you disburse yourself horizontally, is a mad race. As a result, Bansi Kaul²⁶, in 'Panchi Aise Aati Hain'²⁷ hangs prints and makes Arun Saranaika, jump the whole place. The things are going on like this. Is nothing to give, no matter to give. Only this is left to do. Once I was saying in joke to a young director of Bangla Theatre – look, you are not going to achieve much by doing this living Theatre etc. Grotowsky²⁸ will be Grotowsky, Barba will be Barba and Badal Sircar will be Badal Sircar. You go to Purulia, catch hold of a group of Chhau performers, take one of Mahasweta Devi's²⁹ stories and produce that with the leaps and bounds of Chhau. You will be able to give shape to a distinctive theatre form absolutely rooted in the soil of Bengal, presenting the problems of exploitation – like Kavalam Narayan Panikkar's³⁰ or B. V. Karanth's³¹ theatre in their own areas. You will have a theatre.



K.N. Panikkar



Manamohan Thakore



Jerzy Grotowski

...has taken it to heart.

Shyamanand Jalan

I said, you have to do nothing to be successful. Get an international invitation; you won't have to do much effort. Go to Purulia, it is under grip of famine. Catch hold of 8-10 people. They will be available in 200 rupees a month's salary. Get such people who are dancers. Take a writer. Select one of the stories of Mahasweta Devi depicting the life of 'adivasis'. There are many, use a few masks and produce the play. Even if it is 25 percent good, Samik Banerjee will give a headline to that production.

Swaran Chowdhury

No personal remarks.

Shyamanand Jalan

No personal dig and no personal offences meant. I am not saying Samik Banerjee particularly. I said because of the thought content...the whole thing...if you do Ibsen before him, he will catch hold of you.

Swaran Chowdhury

You mean to say that he does not understand Purulia Chhau?

Shyamanand Jalan

I haven't gone deep into it.

Manamohan Thakore

That doesn't mean anything.

Pratibha Agrawal

Please....one minute. We have gone a little astray. Let us come to our point. I request Shiv Kumar to speak.



Eugenio Barba



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Shiv Kumar Joshi

Before that I want to say one or two things. The point that was raised by Samik and after that by Shyamanand. He has already accepted one of my points that Hindi theatre is, more or less, a haphazard theatre today. There is no direction for that. Second point was raised by Samik “whether we have found any good actor or actress in last five years?” I am not very loud about the praise but I think we have got some good actresses in Hindi theatre in the last five years.

Manamohan Thakore

Dipty Bhatt is one.

Shiv Kumar Joshi

Dipty is there. Usha is there. Sonali (Mehta) is there. I don't say that they are of the top standard, but the fault lies with the directors. They do not exploit their talent to the extent they should have done. Another point was raised by Shyamanand that when we talk about Ibsen, we forget that he knew about the society around him. We have never tried to understand the Hindi speaking society around us. All the plays that we have imported are by the outsiders, depicting the ideas of others. I ask these three gentlemen present here that have they tried to understand the Hindi speaking society ever? Have they found out their problems and understand them beforehand? You may use any technique but the basic thing is missing. To build up a rapport with the audience, you have to talk to the audience about what they think. Are we doing that? I am asking this question to Sheo Kumar and Bimal Lath.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

To a large extent, Shyam Bhaia has told about the present position of the Hindi theatre. He said That people come for their personal choice and do it. They don't have any goal. I agree with him partially, not wholly. It may be that the directors are of limited capacity and as such their work does not come up to the mark but I will not agree that they lack sincerity or they do not give enough time to their productions and as such their quality suffers. When they take up a production, they take out necessary time anyway. Work with full sincerity, to full capacity I want to draw your attention to another factor. May be we are feeling that there is not enough theatre at the moment because again and again we are referring to the fifties. I was only 10-12 years old in the fifties. I don't remember anything. The others present here were in the romantic age 22-24, 27-28 after a few years. In that age, anything grows on a virgin land. It grows. This could have been one reason of that. At that age, whatever was done by anybody drew attention of the people. After that, we all grew. Three decades have gone. All of us have grown, have matured. Our outlook has changed. The productions that we appreciated 20 years back may not look that good to us today. In the films, we often experience this. Because our outlook changes, we became matured. This may be one reason. Tapas da was about 30 years of age at that time and Pratibhaji would have been 24-25. At that time her views and outlook was more receptive. It can't be same now. As they don't come across good productions these days, they always hear from the older people – Good old days – good old days. Is it true? I am not sure. I am confused. Is it because we have become old and as such talk about Good Old Days?



Pratibha Agrawal

Let me answer this question itself. It is true – we get old, we mature in due course. Outside situations also change. We were immature at that time, liked whatever was being done. If the things are done today, their level changes, our mind also changes. These both factors go simultaneously, so, may be, there is not so much the question of good old days. In those days, those productions had impressed the audiences of those days. The present day's productions should impress the present day's audience. They may not impress us, the older generation people, but they should impress the today's audiences.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

This is why I said, this may be one of the reasons. Whenever we talk about Hindi theatre, it is of the last twenty years Hindi theatre about which we talk. As such, we refer to two or three productions. May be those directors were of superior intelligence, a particular director might have had a vision, he could do that. And it all stopped there. Any society, any literature...It's not that after Ravi Babu, the Bangla literature or art stopped at that point. There might be different trends. If there is an over powering personality, there might be an over powering production. I am using the expression 'might be' because I don't know. I don't think, I don't have that capacity that I can go on thinking about the theories about why a philosophy.....A worker keeps on doing the things and assesses whether it was liked it or not, who saw and who didn't...the fact is that, opinions have ceased to matter in Hindi Theatre. The reason, many theatre groups have come up now and we usually discourage our actors to go and see the production is going on. I may be wrong Pratibha Ji again, but this is my personal feeling. In the last five years, Hindi theatre has grown a lot, a lot. The number has gone up ten times. Fifteen years back, there used to be 3-4 productions and hardly 20-25 shows of them. Today, there are 22-23 new plays and 250-300 shows of them. The number of people visiting theatre halls varies – somewhere may be 200. At other 300, may be 500 or even 1000. But they are visiting. There is one or the other show going on every day. Shyam Bhaia said, one play a Month, I will say 17-18 plays every month. Of course, under such circumstance, distribution of talent is bound to occur which is a very good sign. Why should the talent be restricted within one group which produces only one play in a year? Why should that talent die this way? They get an exposure and those who have talent, they will...talent cannot remain hidden...the director who has the capacity will do his best. No director will not do his best while preparing a play. Now, if a director has gone down for some reason or he does not have the superior intelligence, it is not because of the audience. The thing is again and again coming to my mind that we get discouraged that there is no audience, there is no audience. No, the audience is there, one gets the audience. We perhaps fix some financial commitment and according to that we don't get the audience. The audience does not match to that. But we were getting this audience earlier also. Earlier also, we used to do 2-3 plays in a year under the banner of Anamika and 3-4 shows each of them. Some we will invite; some will buy tickets and the rest we collected from people. Amateur theatre, the experimental theatre has been going on like this. It goes here and at other places also as I have read. At this point, I would like to suggest one thing, if we feel the need of more audience, we need more



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talent....talent cannot be chiseled. It comes through inner inspiration, through some divine inspiration. It will come by itself. As regards audience why don't the groups who have member audience. Anamika can invite Adakar's members and the same way others can also do. This way, the people can become addicted to theatre. Without any financial burden, why don't we expose our members to other plays also? When it is decided that we are going to do the shows, it is also known that only 200 or 300 seat are going to be sold and another 100 seats are going to remain unutilized. Why don't we invite school or college students free to the shows and make them interested in plays? We had tried it once. Anamika has done it. When it started regular shows with 'Pagla Ghoda' we did a few shows with only 5 or 10 people in the audience. And we were not discouraged. Why do we feel discouraged today that there is no audience? I don't feel that way. I audience I plan only as many as shows as I think can draw the audience.



I calculate as to how many people can come to a particular type of play. Take for example 'Tamrapatra'³². I did only 7 shows of that because I felt that I won't get the audience for more than that. I scrapped the play after that. I do this and as a result I am never frustrated so far as the audience is concerned. I invite people and they come to see the play. Now if I want to get the money from the box office only, then neither I get it from the audience nor the box office. So I feel if the groups practice this, we will get the audience. If you have the talent, it will come by itself. We, who are seniors, should encourage the juniors. Instead of discouraging the new people we should encourage them. Where are the new directors? They are not coming up at all. They don't get encouragement. I and Bimal were pushed into it by Anamika because there was a dearth of directors. I say about myself that I was very reluctant to do that but I was pushed into it. After that who was pushed? perhaps nobody.

Manamohan Thakore

I would ask who had pushed you.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

I am also saying the same thing. I am trying to put myself into that because we are not trying to find new directors. If new directors come, new ideas may come, new talents may come, and new vision may come. But more important than actors are the directors because if the



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directors are not there, new productions, new ideas won't come. Old directors would become stale, they will become too established. That's all I have to say.

Pratibha Agrawal

Speaking first about the growth and development of the Bengali Theatre movement, I have noticed one thing about the response of the audience and other things. This theatre movement started in a way initially with the Sunday morning shows at New Empire and then subsequently in the evenings also. And 'Naye Haath'³³ and other Hindi plays took a start. Theatre Centre was started. Bohurupee was started; Little Theatre and a lot of Tagore plays were being staged. New Empire was a nucleus, in due course; the process grew. The Bangla theatre that we call group theatre started at Mukhtangan then went to Academy of Fine Arts to Sisir Mancha and to Rabindra Sadan, partly. This is what we understand by group theatre. It is much diversified. But what I find that the beginning and development of Hindi Theatre was limited to one mile radius. Quite strange. If you put the centre at Minto Park, it is terribly restricted.

Tapas Sen

OK. People either live in that locality or their work place is there. Kala Mandir basement is the starting point in Hindi Theatre if I remember after the New Empire days.

Shyamanand Jalan

After Kala Mandir there was Hindi high School.

Tapas Sen

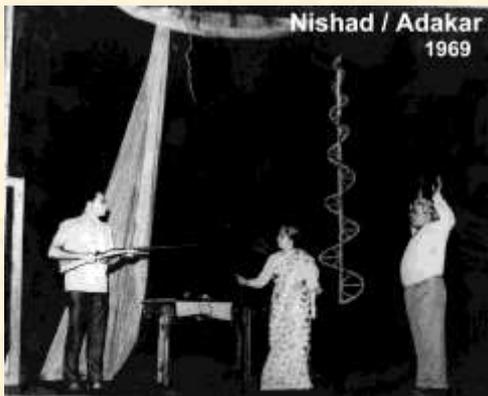
After that gradually came Hindi High School, Shree Shikshayatan along with that La Martiniere and Gyan Manch and may be Max Muller Bhaban also – within one mile radius. The total activity of Hindi theatre is restricted in this area. Whenever I visit Varanasi, Allahabad or Delhi...but Hindi speaking population is not restricted to south of Park Street only, but for presenting Hindi plays we always think of Kala Mandir - the new comer Gyan Manch now. This is the second venue of Hindi theatre. Or may be of the Bengali Theatre also Gyan Manch or a few smaller places, they don't move further. But the Hindi speaking or Hindi understanding audience is scattered all over Calcutta, all over the place. They don't go to those places, they never think of that.

Pratibha Agrawal

Tapas Da, the one big reason for this is the small halls. The Hindi theatre doesn't have big audience yet.



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Position to hire big halls. Another factor – the smaller halls where regular theatre is not done and which can be available to amateur groups, are all situated in this area. This is the area where Bengali theatre people are also doing and the Hindi theatre people also. I fully agree with what you are saying. I am telling this thing for quite sometimes that the people who were supposed to come have already come to us. Now the theatre has to go to them. We should go and stage the plays at those places where Hindi speaking people are living, from where it is quite troublesome to come to this area. The problem is that there is no small hall in Burrabazar, where the play can be staged. People do not want to sit and see the play in a non-air-conditioned hall. Just now, it was said that 15 rupees tickets are sold before the 5 or 3 rupees tickets. There is a general complain that in Anamika, or in any other group, priced tickets remain unsold. Nobody ever comes to us and says that I want to see the play but can't afford, please give me some concession. Let somebody come and say this. Let school people come and say, let college people come and say – we want to send a batch of twenty people, please give us concession. Now, our problem is woven around another problem. We need a small hall to perform. All of us, three or four groups who are present here will be too happy to perform in Burrabazar, once a week in that hall. I think we all will agree to that. There is one hall – Mahajati Sadan – 800 seated huge hall. From where are we going to get such a huge number of people who will purchase the tickets and see the play? When somebody invites, we go and perform there. This is our limitation. Suggest some way to come out of it.

Tapas Sen

There are halls in college square....

Pratibha Agrawal

Which one? But college Street is not the area of Hindi speaking people – Harrison Road or Central Avenue will be more suitable.

Tapas Sen

True, that area is localized.

Pratibha Agrawal

There is one Nopany School, we performed there once. We performed at Ahinsa Prachar Samiti Hall also. The ticket sale was ninety rupees. But, if shows are presented regularly, the audience may be created but we don't dare to do that. Tapas Da, would you like to say something more?

Tapas Sen

No.

Pratibha Agrawal

Now we request Bimal Lath to present his views.

Manamohan Thakore

I would also like to take five minutes in the end.

Pratibha Agrawal

Please don't worry. You will get time to speak. People sitting on that side also. Tapas Da had represented everybody.



Manamohan Thakore

No, only older group.

Pratibha Agrawal

Oh, yes, older only.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

I am also a representative of that part. So, I have spoken for them also, older set.

Bimal Lath

Shiv kumar Bhai has raised a question in the very beginning as to what is your goal. Why do you do theatre? He may be finding the absence of goal in Hindi theatre which he may not be finding in Gujarati or Marathi theatre – or may not be there also. Something more or less on these lines was said. I visit Bombay quite often and go to theatre at present all over the country is much ahead of the work that is being done in Gujarati, Marathi or Bengali even for that matter. The type of commitment that is found in Hindi theater is not seen in any other theatre. And I can present examples of this, I have hundreds of them.

Pratibha Agrawal

Please give a few out of those hundreds.

Bimal Lath

Just recently, I saw a play of Aravind Deshpande in Gujarati, in February. The same ‘Sansanikhez’ play, same type of story. A man comes on stage and he kills one person, then the second and the third. And mind you, this was his group Theatre and not the professional theatre or Shyambazar Theatre. I went to see a Marathi play, could not sit there. It was a three and a half hours play and the language barrier was there but the problem was different. I felt that this was a play the type of which we used to see 25-30 years back. The same type is coming again. Now if you go to Prithvi Theatres, you find long queue there of Hindi theatre people. They do not get the dates. The theatre is booked in advance, quite in advance. Prithvi Theatre could be a very good example for Calcutta but I will talk about that later. So the question is of goal. Why do we do theatre? It looks that we are doing it without any aim. Let us take an example of Bohurupee. Bohurupee is the most important theatre group of the Group Theatre in Bengal. Now take up today’s Telegraph. There is a very nice article on Bohurupee. How it started after coming out of IPTA³⁴, did Nabanna³⁵, it was done by IPTA first. Then after coming out of IPTA, Bohurupee repeated it. The goal was – to do the play. What type of plays we will do what we will do, was not clear. They did other plays – did Pathik³⁶, then one felt that what they were doing is not enough. Rabindranath is there, the most important...let us do Rabindranath’s plays, and ‘Char Adhyay’ was presented. Why? Because it was Rabindranath’s writing. What was the goal of Bohurupee? to stage a play. With what purpose? It was not thought of. There was no purpose to give any direction to anybody. Later, today, Kumar Babu has said in his statement that we seek to convey to the essential humanity of the people and not to cater to the popular taste. Today, if we talk about the popular taste, then we have to see the Shyambazar Theatre. And we will have to talk about that only. Today, if Anamika or Adakar or Padatik do that type of plays – such as



Bimal Lath



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‘Bibiyan ka Madrasa’ or ‘Kissa Shadi Ka’³⁷, I think there will be no box office problem, the tickets will sell well. But if Anamika does plays like ‘Katha Ek Kansa Ki’³⁸, then they cannot have more than 3-4 shows. There are constraints, big constraints in producing a play. If Anamika decides to produce a play like Antigone³⁹, it can’t have more than 3-4 shows. So, so far as the goal is concerned, I will say we want to do plays we want to do good plays and that is our goal. Let me say about the group to which I belong to – from which I have been invited as a director – I would prefer doing one good play in 2 years than doing six non-plays in a year or two. To give one good production is good enough for me, it satisfies me. OK. As Shyam Bhaiya said, I am not a professional, my bread and butter does not depend on theatre. If by doing one production, I feel that I have got my food, it is enough for me. Shyam Bhaiya raised the question of amateurism. I will finish by giving my reactions in short. I won’t get into broader perspective – this happened in last five years or this in last 15-20 years. I have a feeling that Shyam Bhaiya has got extremely confused. He has become confused since last ten-twelve years. Sometimes he talks about himself being a stage manager. He has told me – “I want to become a stage Manager, I don’t want to direct plays. I want to manage the plays here. I will invite Dubey, I will invite Ranjit (Kapoor) and others to do plays for me and I will manage the plays. Now, those who are with Shyam Bhaiya such as Dharamvir Bharati,⁴⁰ such as Samik Banerjee, like Dharani Ghosh, who see the end of Hindi theatre with Shyam Bhaiya, they are busy in that history only. They haven’t got time in last five years to see plays. Shiv kumar was very right in saying that. Samik Banerjee hasn’t seen my Antigone or Katha Ek Kansa Ki either.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Not seen?

Bimal Lath

Had another type of depiction. So far as the question of amateurism is concerned, I would like to talk about plays like Shuturmurg, Aashadh ka Ek din, Naye Haath, Evam Indrajit, Chapte Chapte all these have been landmark productions of Anamika and Hindi Theatre. Shyam Bhaiya was an amateur at that time also, a solicitor also, to some extent a successful solicitor. Yet being that entire he produced those plays. It is just a chance that out of those five-six plays I was also involved with the creative process of 4-5 plays, as Shyam Bhaiya’s left-hand man. He may not call me his right-hand man. In those days, the process used to be, let us take ‘Pagla Ghoda’ for instance. The way we used to rehearse and work in those days, I don’t think that much difference has come in that over the years.





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Shyam Bhaiya used to come running at six thirty or quarter to seven, and full-fledged rehearsal would go on for two or two and half hours, and then studying at home, may be till 2- 2.30 in the night. Kiran Bhabi often complains. Under those very processes, these plays were done. Even now they are being done. So to say those good productions can be done only when we become professionals. Kumar Babu, he is not a whole timer. He teaches somewhere. In the whole of Bangla group theatre that is there - Who is involved in theatre all the time and earns his livelihood by theatre? There may be a few professors who may be teaching in Rabindra Bharati like that in Nandikar. But I don't agree that you can do good theatre only when you earn your livelihood by that. It is true that the sweetness of a soft drink will depend on the amount of sugar put in that but I don't think you can do good theatre only when you are involved in it the whole day. I totally disagree with that. Theatre is a thinking process, an ever-evolving process which goes on developing from personality to personality – which keeps on churning in your mind which provide visuals, the pictures come before your eyes and after all this comes to surface at the level of perfection. Shiv Kumar had said one thing that all the time, we go on talking about the old days. At that age, the Earth was barren. We liked whatever grew on that. There is one book before me – Nadi Pyasi Thi⁴¹. Anamika staged this play in 1957 or...Shyam Bhaia?

Shyamanand Jalan

1958. (See endnote of Nadi Pyasi Thi)

Bimal Lath

In 1958, we did three plays – Nadi Pyasi Thi, Sangmarmar Par Ek Raat⁴² and Neeli Jheel⁴³. These three plays are in this book. This belongs to Burra Bazaar Kumar Sabha Pustakalaya and Shyam Bhaia had made the whole production script on this book. In the beginning, there is perhaps the name of Pratibhaji also there that she will do this role, Subhakaaran Raankaa is there, Sushilaji (Bhandari) is there. Names of Badri Tiwari and Shymanand is also noted with 'either' 'Or', there is either or in Krishna Swaroop Kakkad's name also. I don't remember which one he did. In those days, everybody had to write down his role by hand. Even one copy....no question of Xerox etc...these have been introduced just three four years back. Typed copies were also not provided in those days – there might have been some exceptions I do not know. In this book itself the corrections were made by pen. So, I just wanted to give an idea about the state of things in those days. Nowadays either the books are bought or Xerox copies are prepared. So whatever would come up with some specialty was something new. When Anamika's one play was done, around thousand people would see the play in 2-3 days. An enthusiasm ...a sort of festive mood used to be there in every play.



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Sangmarmar Par Ek Raat/ Anamika-1956



Nadi Pyasi Thi / Anamika-1957



Naye Haath /Anamika-1957

Neeli Jhil /Anamika-1962



Ashad Ka Ek Din/Anamika-1960





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Chhapte Chhapte / Anamika-1963



Laharon Ke Rajhans Anamika-1966



Shuturmurg/Anamika-1967

Evam Indrajit /Anamika-1968





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I have been seeing this right from the beginning – a new play means a festival. There will be a new Brochure published – something very common. It is not the same today. Nobody publishes a souvenir with every new play and raise 30-40 thousand rupees. the theatre halls that have come up with an idea of expanding the knowledge about theatre, what is their condition, you all must be knowing because most of the people who are sitting here have to be on the back side of the stage, there are very few who get the privilege of being in the auditorium. Nowadays, three hours' time is given for stage rehearsals. Two or two and half an hour play gets 3 hours' time for rehearsal. Evening may be engaged or maybe not, I am saying this with full responsibility. The stage is not given for rehearsal. So rehearse in the mornings only.

Pratibha Agrawal

Kala Mandir gives.

Bimal Lath

No, they don't.

Pratibha Agrawal

They have given just recently. We have done the rehearsal.

Bimal Lath

Then, it's an exception. They may cancel your booking even on the day. You may have to do your show without stage rehearsal on which you might be depending. I know about Gyan Manch. They will not give you stage for rehearsal in the evening even if it is not booked. I have positive proof. You call everybody at 10-10.30 in the morning. Rehearse for three hours. If you take more time, you have to pay extra at the rate of 200, 250, or 300 rupees for every 30 minutes or an hour. Meter ticks on. If there is load shedding, it is to your account. You can take extra connection beyond 10 for a payment of 50 rupees each. The theatre man (to whom the management of the stage has been given) adds to the bill. Shyam Bhaia is not only a successful solicitor but a successful businessman also. At Gyan Manch extra light connection is left to the Theatre man, Gyan Manch does not come in the picture. These are the constraints. One does theatre, from where does the money come? Sales are 500-550-600. The expense for a repeat show comes to 1400-1500 on an average. If you give more ads in the personal column, it will go up to 2000. Under these constraints, one has to work. On one side, you have to look towards the economic side of it, on the other towards the rehearsal. Not only this, you are worried about the professionals also. You are not sure when they will arrive and whether you will get the stage in time or not. Charges for Gyan Manch are 800 rupees. According to authorities, this is not enough. Electric charges are quite a lot. Air conditioning etc is there. And our Hindi spectator won't come without air-conditioning. If Shiv Kumar has to stage a play, he will do so at Gyan Manch only. If I have to do, I will do at Kala Mandir (basement) or Gyan Manch only. If you go to Sisir Mancha, your booking may be cancelled any time if some Government program comes up.

Tapas Sen

And you won't get the stage for rehearsals either.



Pratibha Agrawal

No rehearsals at all.

Tapas Sen

There is no provision for rehearsals there.

Pratibha Agrawal

Great!

Bimal Lath

A few actors and some directors have taken up the responsibility of doing Hindi Theatre on their heads, let them suffer, work hard and do theatre. If the plays are not being done or their standard is not satisfactory, nobody, neither Samik Babu nor Dharani Babu come to see what our constraints are. With this background, I wanted to talk about Prithvi Theatres of Bombay. If you have to put up a play in the evening, the stage is available to you the whole day. You put your set in the morning and do whatever you want to do the whole day.

Pratibha Agrawal

You mean to say the whole day booking for you?

Bimal Lath

Yes.

Shyamanand Jalan

The reason, the person who has made the Prithvi Theatre is a theatre person himself. In Calcutta, all the halls have been made by the industrialists or the businessmen, so they are not at all aware of these problems that we face, these are not important to them.

Pratibha Agrawal

Do you think that your problem will be solved if you are given the theatre for the whole day?

Swaran Chowdhury

It is one of the things.

Bimal Lath

It can make differences.

Manomohan Thakore

How?

Bimal Lath

Suppose, if I get the hall for the whole day, I would plan to call all the artists on one day instead of three days. I can do my technical rehearsal one day and one day I can do my full stage rehearsal. Hindi theatre is passing through all these constraints. I don't know whether Bengali theatre is in a better position or worse than this, I haven't gone through that. Tapas Babu or Samik Babu can tell us about them. Hindi theatre has to find a way to come out of these theatre halls. Let us come out of the four walls of these industrialist theatres.

Manomohan Thakore

But how?

Bimal Lath

Let us do intimate theatre. I have given myself an opportunity to present Antigone. ...not within four walls of the theatre and not to do any theatre in proscenium theatre unless the



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halls are available under our conditions. At present, you are taking 40 bookings for Kala Mandir basement or Gyan Manch. You are treated the same way by these theatre halls which have been made for the Hindi theatre, as you get for a music program by V. Balsara or a band company. If you want to make a change due to some unavoidable reason, your 75% money is deducted. This is the treatment that you get, and is at par with the music program whose organizers or clubs have raised a sum of 40-50 thousand for this. They will put ten thousand in their own pocket and produce something by gathering a few artists from here and there and do anything. And they claim (owners of the hall) that they are associated with Hindi theatre and are committed to that. Where is that commitment? If you tell me and if there is any solution of that, I am willing to sit with you. There was an incident recently at Gyan Manch, here itself. I am giving the name. There was load shedding. One of the transformers needed oiling cleaning and it took more than an hour. We were told that two hours of our time was already over. I said – How? Your people were working. The reply was – we don't know all that. Your booking was from this to this time, you pay so much extra. We didn't pay. Not that we couldn't do but just to point out that this was wrong. The bill is still lying with me unpaid.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

Hindi theatre is suffering a lot because of finances. I have sent a proposal to Gyan Manch and I am awaiting their reply. The proposal is that if you give your stage to one of our cultural groups on any day in the week for one year on half rental which will be covering your daily expenses and that cultural group will provide publicity and theatre hall free of charge to Hindi theatre groups. In this, Gyan Manch will be foregoing only 300 rupees per week and that organization will have to take the responsibility of publicity and another 4-5 hundred rupees per show. This way, they will have to spend 25-30 thousand rupees in a year.

Bimal Lath

I don't agree. Has Gyan Manch been made for 'kharcha Nikalna'? Where is the aim? When we talk about the Hindi theatre and its aims, where is the aim? If Gyan Manch has been made to earn money, let them accept this. They don't say this. Why can't Gyan Manch contribute a lakh of rupees from its own fund for the sake of Hindi theatre? Why cannot Kala Mandir part with some of the income of crores of rupees that they are making from the main hall?

Gyanwati Lath

Why Hindi theatre only? Why? If they part with their money why for Hindi only?

Pratibha Agrawal

Because Hindi theatre still belongs to under privileged class. There are many things that are done for women or for Harijans etc.

Bimal Lath

Just as ladies have separate seats in the buses. The same way here also Hindi only tag can be put. Let us leave that. It is good that Gyan Bai is speaking of 'all theatre'. This is a bigger commitment.

Pratibha Agrawal

Bimal Babu, now please wind up your talk so that we can proceed ahead.



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Bimal Lath

Even with all these constraints, whatever is being done on Hindi stage is not negligible. Shyam_Bhaia organized an international Seminar under the auspices of Padatik and tried to combine that with dance. That was a huge job, very huge. Anamika organized a seminar on Natyashashtra. These have been done in the last 5 years. That was a big contribution to theatre. Then the films based on plays were shown, discussions were held. Another big contribution. At present, some people sitting inside and also outside, look down upon Hindi theatre. They should stop doing that. Big things are being done in Hindi theatre. There are people who are seriously involved, people who are doing with full earnestness. They are honest people working with honesty, no dishonesty. Judging how much is being done depends on individual evaluation. How you look at them, what is your view point, how you evaluate them that are different matter. It is my work. I evaluate that as a big work, you can evaluate as a work of lesser importance. You should accept that the work is being done, a lot. In Hindi theatre in the last five years Rangakarmi, Padatik, Anamika, Adakar, Sangeet Kala Mandir, Madhyam, Vividh Kala Vihar, Sarjana etc have been active. Now if we sit with the lists of their productions, only then we can know about the quantity of work and evaluate their quality.



Pratibha Agrawal

So far as the list is concerned, I may give you some data. In the last 5 years Anamika produced 'Ek Tha Gadha' in 1978, 'Katha Ek Kansa Ki' and 'Himalaya Ki Chaya'⁴⁴ in 1979, 'Haanush'⁴⁵ in 1980, 'Antigone' in 1982 and 'Kamala' just recently in 1983. I am leaving a few other insignificant plays. I think Adakar's 'Rishtey Natey'⁴⁶ was also done in the last five years.

Bimal Lath

In 1977.

Pratibha Agrawal

One year this way or that, doesn't matter that much. Sheo Kumar in the last five years has produced some of his plays, some under the banner of Vividh Kala Vihar and some under Sarjana. He did 'Tamrapatra' and is doing now 'Ek Din Aadalat Mein'⁴⁷.

Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

Thahara Hua Pani⁴⁸ and Paperweight⁴⁹ were also there.

Pratibha Agrawal

'Paperweight' was done in December 1977. Rangakarmi did 'Parichay'⁵⁰, 'Gudia Ghar'⁵¹ and now is busy with 'Maa'⁵². In Shyamanand's





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Padatik, 'Shakuntala'⁵³ was done. Uddhwasta Dharamshala⁵⁴, Bicchu, Bibion ka Madrasa, 'Hazar Chaurashi ki Maa'⁵⁵ and now Kauwa Chala Hans ki Chaal. These were done during last five years.

Shyamanand Jalan

'Aur Tota Bola' was there.

Pratibha Agrawal

Yes. 'Aur Tota Bola' also. It is very necessary to know as to what has been done. If work is

being done, we should know about them and not carry the impression that nothing is being done. I feel there are three aspects of the issue under discussion. First one is economic and the second of standard. Both are important. Putting up one public show means a

loss of thousand rupees; leave aside the basic production expenditure. How many shows can be done in such a situation? The second issue is also important, the need to find out what impact is being left on today's audience by the contemporary theatre. And do we need to do something in that direction? Now I request you...Swaran Ji, would you like to say something? You Khaled Da? Kiranmay Babu? Anybody from the audience?



Audience 1

The major part of the discussion was centered on the individuals and not the theatre itself. I, as an actor would like to say, in short, as to how I feel about the thing. I cannot analyze. I had noted a few points. The first thing needs to be clarified is as to why are we doing theatre, for whom and what should be the content of it. Problem of auditorium is a later matter. First decide what type of theatre you want to do.

Bimal Lath

The issue has already been discussed in detail.

Audience 1

But the issue was not clear. Why do we do theatre – to pass time or to meet a few friends...

Bimal Lath

This is repetition.

Pratibha Agrawal

Your next point?

Audience 1

The second point, there is no training provision in theatre, very little training is given. The question of professional or amateur is secondary. You may be either. The important factor is to understand the attitude. What is our attitude towards theatre? You had written somewhere that why should we go to the audience? They should come to us. I think this is not the right attitude. These are a few questions which I wanted to put before you.

Bimal Lath

All these points have been discussed here.



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Manomohan Thakore

I would just refer to few points in short, that have come up here from the statement of Shyamanand which were basic controversial issues. What others said was mostly explaining the situation. I will also do the same. First is, Shiv Kumar Bhai raised the question about our goal to which Shyamanand said that Hindi theatre is in a haphazard state at present. Now, I

don't know of which goal he was referring to – the one that of group theatre or one which wants to change the society. I feel somewhere in the back of our mind we want to change the society. We feel frustrated, we feel angry (because the situation is not congenial). It is a very big goal, requiring much bigger effort. What I could gather from what Shyamanand said was that we should also discuss this issue whenever we talk about the conveniences and inconveniences of today's life. I feel this is a very good thing that drama can do. What more

you expect from drama? Drama will change the whole world into is the depiction of life as we find underplayed depending on the actor's limitations. But this gap that I am also associated with spectator and as an actor as well. even today that Shyamanand had 'Indrajit' or 'Setzuan ki Bhali' understand ourselves through

to realize what we are, where do we stand vis-a-vis society and we are going ahead with the same goal before us. One other point Shyamanand emphasized forcefully because he is perhaps the most professional-minded amongst us all. Even before the formation of Anamika Kala Sangam he was thinking that professionalism is a must for theatre. So far as I remember, Shyamanand was the first person in Calcutta who started talking about the formation of a repertory company – to have a set of paid professionals whose job it would be. He even advertised thrice on behalf of Anamika. The screening was done, some people came also. All this was there in his mind even at that time. I think that in nature of professional drama on Hindi stage – professional drama with an amateur temperament – is practiced by the National School of Drama Repertory. NSD Repertory artists are all paid artists and one expects good standard plays from them. Polar Fans had invited them and the play that they presented was 'Sandhya Chaya'. It was just a chance that Adakar had staged the same play recently under the title 'Rishtey Natey'. I was really astonished to read Dharani Babu's review. He wrote – 'I wish they had seen Kishen Kumar's production'. Now Kishen Kumar had staged his plays with totally amateur artists. You may call him a professional director in the sense that he



cannot be the mission like – we Aryans. It is not like that. Drama today – hyperbolic or director or the producer and the is even today – I just want to say theatre since a long time as a We have the same goal before us at the time of doing 'Evam Aurat'. Definitely we want to theatre today. We ultimately want



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doesn't do anything else. He is not a solicitor, nor a businessman nor an industrialist and as such Adakar has to meet all his requirements which again are big constraints on Adakar's very limited resources. But apart from that I director in the sense of the term that he away to somewhere else if he gets a salary or to somebody else paying even more. He the group that he has formed here. In that even works with purely amateur artists. If



Kishen Kumar

won't call him a professional would leave Adakar and go of eighteen hundred rupees will not. He is committed to sense he is an amateur and he is capable of producing a

play which can be compared with something that is supposed to be better than the NSD production. I think this is a very big thing and Calcutta can be proud of this. And that is the thing that sustains us today in producing the dramas. Still I am saying please see the productions. Shyamanand himself is an example in this. When he himself was an amateur. He was purely an amateur ...not as successful as a solicitor he is today. His productions were superior even than his own productions of last five years. I would like to mention only 'Udhawasta Dharamshala', none else. So far as other productions are concerned he is doing them as pastime. It may be 'Bicchu' or 'Bibiyon ka Madrasa'. He wants to make people laugh and he is doing that with 'Bibiyon ka Madrasa'. He himself is enjoying doing that and provides entertainment to others also. That is also a purpose of drama. But they are not great dramas. 'Udhawasta Dharamshala' is a great theatre that he has produced recently. Today he has become very professional in his attitude in his entire set up. The third thing that I liked most his statement that – idealism is the only validity of an amateur. I entirely agree with him. This validity right from the beginning is what has kept Anamika's actors and workers together till date. Today, when Rangakarmi produces 'Maa' or 'GudiaGhar' or 'Parichay' it is because of idealism. They don't want to do 'Kissa Shadi Ka'. Similarly other groups of Calcutta. I think this is a very good sign. More and more people are coming today, more and more of them are coming into theatre. Their standard may not be as it used to be in the earlier days. It doesn't matter. There may be some historical reasons, some personal. Yama...I am talking at a very personal level. Yama was a very good actress even before marriage and still is the same. It may be a fact that Shyamanand was there, Pratibhaji, Nagarji all were there and they could do good productions. Now there are many groups and different people have joined them. Yet I feel, it is useless to do theatre without any sort of idealism. Idealism is the only thing that sustains us. Professionalism cannot be our goal. If it is there very good indeed, fortunate. I only want to say that whether we turn professional or not, Hindi theatre should go on doing good theatre. Professionalism may give us good theatre but we will never be able to do great theatre without idealism. Thank you.

Suresh Dutta

I am seeing and doing theatre since a long time. Bangla and Hindi both and not only in India but outside the country also. I found that the background of Hindi theatre is much bigger than Bangla theatre. I am so happy to see that so many people are engaged in doing theatre. There was a time when I was seeing only Anamika's plays because I had never heard the name of any other group. After talking to Pratibha Di, I came to know that there are other groups also



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who are doing theatre. I think after Sombhu Da, I am not sure whether Sisir Babu tried earlier or later, nobody tried to organize professional theatre in our country. I don't know why Sombhu Da left that. I feel that if some more people with professional mind-set would have joined him in that endeavor, he should have been able to do something significant with a set-designer like Khaled Chowdhury and a light-designer like Tapas Sen. If professional theatre would have developed, taken a definite shape, these people also would have been able to work with professional mind/attitude. The people who are staging plays at Kala Mandir (basement) or Gyan Manch, they would have worked out with that attitude. There is a theatre in Bombay. As the point has been raised here today, I would like to add that we would have been able to check that vulgarity which has crept into Bangla theatre recently. Till now, those elements haven't crept into Hindi theatre. The vulgar plays that are being done with light and vulgar dialogues, horrible scenes for example in 'Schewik Galo Juddhe', we cannot watch them with family. The play is good, contemporary but un-necessarily vulgarity is introduced in them. I have seen many plays. With my puppet troupe I have visited Bombay, Delhi, Lucknow and even the villages. I have visited many places. I found that people come to theatre. I feel that if Hindi theatre is done with a straight and simple mind, not only Hindi speaking but Bengali audience would also come to see Hindi theatre. I could not follow the Hindi of 'Gudia Ghar' but Thakore Bhai gave me one clue somewhere which we Bengalis are not able to get hold of. People are building temples and all that, I say, if you do theatre with that mentality, it will clean your mind too. Doing theatre is a sort of self-realization. Tell me how many directors are there? very few. We were just talking about the absence of a theatre hall in Burrabazaar because it is there that we will get the Hindi speaking people in big numbers. This has not been done till date, neither for Bangla theatre, nor for Hindi. I could not do it for my Puppet theatre as well. If something like this can be done, I feel Hindi theatre will rise high.



Suresh Dutta

Pratibha Agrawal

Thanks a lot Suresh. Now Gyan Bai –

Gyanwati Lath

Let me first clear the point raised by Bimal. He doesn't know that the theatre hall still owes three lakhs that it has to pay. What they would they do after that, what will be the income – the estimate for next six months has come to me. Both sides are equal. I cannot tell you what the position will be after clearing the loan, what will be the income, I don't know. But there are a few things that cannot be done at Gyan Manch at all which can be done at Prithvi. Somebody may suggest opening a canteen here. We have space but we cannot open a canteen here because we run a school. We have to work with a lot of restrictions. Now 'theatre man' is managing the stage. If they want to give certain facilities to users, we have no objections. You all know, how difficult it is to take work from the staff. Theatre man is already in trouble with them. People don't want to work. They don't want to work beyond 10 PM. That too because they are Theatre man's staff otherwise they want to pull down the curtain by 9:30 itself. It is on hold for the time being. How long this will be possible, I don't know. Gyan



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Manch has to bear a loss of lakh of rupees annually. Why cannot we all together build a small theatre hall like Prithvi with a capacity to accommodate 200 people because more than that does not come if you do daily shows. Or it can be of 300 seats. There can be a canteen in that – an ideal theatre place. If we can do something like this...I will also join in that – a place free from all restrictions. The building belongs to the school. I have to take care of the economic side and then abide by the rules laid by the school because children study here. I request you all ...I have been thinking about it since a long time. I have spoken to Shyamanand also. He had a piece of land behind his space. Why doesn't he build a small hall in that? One may or may not get the suitable place somewhere else but this land belongs to him. Everything can be done there. It is nearby also. Why can't there be a place like this built with the help of the entire theatre community. Then everything will be possible. I had to say only this much.

Pramod Shroff

In that case, my request to Gyan Bai would be to change the manifesto of Gyan Manch and write a new one.

Bimal Lath

Look, there is Shriram Centre in Delhi and Prithvi theatre in Bombay. These two have provided a new life to theatre in those two places. Many theatre people gather there. Some almost regularly, you don't need to make an appointment with them. You go there and you will find them there – at least 5-6 of them. You were telling about the school. But the school closes at 4 PM. But let us not get into that. Those are your constraints. I can tell you about my constraints. Under what circumstances we are working. If some way can be found out, we will all be together. We will work for the cause.

Pratibha Agrawal

Thanks. And now Samik Bandyopadhyay, he will wind up the discussion.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

I will just sum up the discussion. The points that have been made – we haven't agreed that the Hindi theatre in the last five years has been in a very bad state. While some of us think that lots of other activities have taken place in the Hindi theatre which have been excellent. But there has been a dearth in the quality of the plays. The reason as Shyamanand suggested, according to him is basically a question of professionalism versus non-professionalism and this has been challenged by others with lots of evidence underlying how even within the constraints of non-professionalism, we have produced excellent plays, some of the best works of the last fifteen or twenty years belong to the non-professional tradition with its limitation and constraints and many other things. So may be, the other thing that Manomohan Thakore had suggested, I will add one little point to it. When he refers to the example of 'Rishtey





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Natey' and 'Sandhya Chaya', the Calcutta production and the NSD production, I fully agreed with Dharani. I didn't have occasion to write about it that the RishteyNatey production in Calcutta was much more imaginative, much richer production than 'Sandhya Chaya' done by NSD group. The one thing that is happening with NSD is that with its professional structure, in all that is that they have cultivated a lot of skills. They have all the time and that result in a kind of theatre which may not be the best kind of theatre for India, which is a lavishly supported theatre and which automatically becomes a self-indulgent theatre. You don't think of your audience, the challenge of the play trying to interpret it going to it, through your life's experience. Something of that goes off, because you live an artificial insulated life confined to the theatre so when you come to interpret the play, you interpret only in terms of acting, production values, not in terms of life with which you are involved. This is an experience. The whole world is realizing today that the professional theatre is not the all and be all in theatre. That can be one kind of theatre. There will be always other kind of theatre which will not be professional and more challenging, more daring and experimental. There is no reason to bring them together, equate them and prove that professional theatre is a better theatre and non-professional theatre is worse than that. This does not follow logically. That's one point that has been made. I am only giving it a theoretical direction. The other thing on which Bimal has been very clear that the different constraints which stand in the way of the non-professional Hindi theatre activity and a lot of that is shared by the Bengali and the English Theatre as well. The same kind of constraints exists in Bengali theatre. It is also doing same theatre and the similar problems, rules and limitations function there too. The other thing that Bimal suggests very intelligently and I think that also had theoretical point about it. Whenever a theatre group realizes – I see it as a sign of Health of Theatre Group...that when a theatre group realizes that we are in a problematic state, that we are at a dead end, we are not able to do things that we want to do, do things better, or to go back into problems and try to understand them on a theoretical level. So that is the reason, for example I worked with Anamika very closely both in the Natyashashtra Seminar and the Film-Theatre programme and seminar. It was a great joy to work with Anamika that closely. I felt that in Anamika what they were feeling and I was also feeling at that stage of time that lets try to get other ideas, that lets try to get things to sustain ourselves, gives us fresh ideas, fresh problems and challenges by exposing ourselves to Natyashashtra experience through the current theatre interaction. Which, when we go into this kind of thing it is also a tacit acknowledgement that we are facing problems and let's try to think, let's try to energize the intellectual process and the thinking process. It is important so that we can come back to it with fresh sustenance and energy. So, when a group does that type of thing, faces that kind of a problem, and if it cannot do for the time being for different factors, the wonderful plays that were done in the past or will be done in the future well, it is a part, it is a sign of a process. There is no question of saying it bad or good because it also happens to a human being. A great artist can come into a problem when for five years he can't do anything, he can't create anything. He goes back, he reads a lot, he thinks a lot, he theorizes a lot, he analyzes a lot so that he can draw his energy afresh. When this process takes place and this has taken place in the last five



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years, this is a sign of health. So these are the points came up with one little bit of a personal explanation because I have been very strongly attacked is that...now, just as an audience has the right to see what plays it wants to see and which ones he doesn't want to, the same way the critic also... he is not a God or anything like that. He is just a spectator except with a little bit of special interest with a little bit of training for formulating, analyzing and articulating his reactions to the theatre. He doesn't have any special kind of reaction. He has the same kind of reactions as the rest of the audience but he can articulate them better because he has a theoretical training, a theoretical build up for that. That is all the difference between an ordinary audience and a critic. So, I think the critic has the right to choose a play; you can't force him to see a play. That is one thing. So I was exercising my right and the way I exercise my right is just the way a common spectator chooses to see a particular film or a particular play. Now what are the things he goes by? He goes by the play. If it is a play he knows, if he has heard about it, if he has read the play, if he knows the play then does he find it interesting. If yes, I would like to see how they are doing it. The director, He has seen some works of the director and he has a certain notion about this director. This person is doing it. I have found his earlier works interesting. It need not be all good but interesting, challenging. So I am interested in seeing what this director does. There may be another director whose work I haven't liked for two years, three years, and four years. I have tried it for four or five times and have been disappointed every time. I decide – well, for next three or four years I won't see any play by that director. But, somebody comes and says – No, this man has done a good thing, it is interesting. So I go back again and I come back to the director. This is the second factor and the third factor is of course actor and actresses. The other factor which should have mattered here but which hasn't mattered is of course the designer, the music director, other factors who also happen but these haven't historically, whatever may be the reason become or regarded with that importance here. These are the considerations which make me see a play. So the fact remains, and I hope Sheo Kumar wouldn't mind it. I had been a regular goer to Sheo Kumar's plays over a period of time, when I found two, three, four plays where I was disappointed. Sheo kumar was treating the plays very literally, wasn't adding anything to it, that kind of thing. So I thought, next four play would be this. I know the plays roughly. This is the play. I wouldn't get anything extra out of that. The same thing will happen with several directors, several actor-actresses. So this is the combination from which I choose. It has happened with Anamika, it has happened with other groups. At the same time, a new group emerges. Say, Rangakarmi, I have seen all the plays by Rangakarmi. Because I found it is an exciting group, a new group and I found them very interesting. I see two plays. I like both of them. So I come back for the third play. So it just sinks into my mind, it fits into my choice structure. There have been two or three incidents when Bimal said – I haven't seen 'Ek Tha Gadha' – I have seen 'Ek Tha Gadha' but for a moment I had forgotten that I had seen the play. When he went on I remembered the play, yes, I had seen 'Ek Tha Gadha'. That is not very complimentary to a production. At the same time, Bimal's 'Langdi Taang' I remember and every time I think of Bimal or I speak about Anamika, one of the plays flashes all the time is 'Langdi Taang'. So it isn't the question of any prejudice or



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animosity towards a director and these things are not always – let's be very frank, very clearly or theoretically sorted out. I don't decide to boycott somebody but it is just human. Well, I decide I will go to see but it becomes low priority for some time. Now for the last few Anamika plays, I have gone at the fourth or fifth show. For 'Kamala', I went to see it very early. Why? Because I have liked the play, I have read the play and I have found it very interesting, a very rich play. I was very excited about the fact that Swaran was doing a play after a long time, because I have liked Swaran's productions when she was doing plays in the Oscars. So the moment I see these names, these things flash in my mind. These are Swaran's earlier works, I haven't seen Swaran's work for a long time, and I would go and see what she does. And Pratibha Ji, Yama and Nagar Ji were taking on important roles after a very long time; I have admired their acting in the past. So all these interests accumulate and there is a normal human interest for me to come down and see it. This is how just an ordinary spectator also chooses his play and I think us critics, we are prepared to take all the attacks from the directors just as we do the attacking. You have the right to attack back. So let us treat it at that level. At the same time, let there be this understanding also between us. Now, when I see Sheo Kumar reacting that strongly I feel honestly and very humanly that Sheo Kumar is affected and hurt by the fact that I haven't gone to see his plays. It is human. When you love your play, you want your audience, you want a friend, a friend critic, a critic who has seen your plays, to come and see it. This is human and any director who loves his work, minds it.



Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala

I didn't mind you're not seeing my plays. I minded only because the topic was of five years and I felt you are out of Hindi theatre for last five years so your knowledge about Hindi theatre was incomplete. That is what I minded. I did not mind for a moment. I do not even remember who has seen or not seen my plays because on principle I am not doing plays for individuals.

Pratibha Agrawal

With this we come to the end of the discussion and I wish to thank all of you for your participation.





Endnote

- ¹ **Manamohan Thakore** : (1923 – 1999) Author (Guj), translator.
- ² **Usha Ganguly** (1945-) Theatre director, actor. Founder Hindi Theatre Group Rangkarmee. (1976).recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy award (1998)
- ³ **Badal sircar**: (1925 – 2011) Internationally acclaimed actor, director playwright. Pioneer of Third Theatre Movement, founded Theatre Group Shatabdi (1976). Recipient of Padmashree and Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1972.
- ⁴ **Habib Tanvir** : (1923 – 2009) director, actor, playwright. Founded Naya Theatre (1959). Recipient of Padma Bhushan (2002), Padmashree (1983), Kalidas Samman (1990), Sangeet Natak Academy award in (1969).
- ⁵ **Shyamanand Jalan** : (1934 – 2010) theatre director, and actor. Co-founded Hindi Theatre Group Anamika (1955), Anamika Kala Sangam (1967) a cultural organization. Founder of Padatik, theatre group Padatik (1972) and Padatik Dance Centre (1989). Recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy award (1972).
- ⁶ **Caravan Guzar Gaya**: Translation of a Gujrati Play by B. Baidya, translated in Hindi by Manmohon Thakore. produced by Adakaar, Kolkata (1978), directed by Kishen Kumar.
- ⁷ **Kamala**: Marathi play by Vijay Tendulkar. Translated in Hindi by Vasant Dev, produced by Anamika, Kolkata, directed by Swarn Chowdhury (1983).
- ⁸ **Nandikar**: A Theatre Group founded by Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, Asit Bandyopadhyay & others in 1960.
- ⁹ **Tin Poyshar Pala** : An adaptation of Brecht's 'Three Penny Opera', adapted and directed by Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, produced by Nandikar (1961)
- ¹⁰ **Bertolt Brecht** : Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht (1898 – 1956). A German poet, playwright & director.
- ¹¹ **Tapas Sen** : (1924 – 2006) light designer.
- ¹² **Khaled Chowdhury**: (1919 – 2014) theatre stage designer, artist, and folk music authority.
- ¹³ **Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala** : (1941-) actor, director and founder of theatre group Proscenium.
- ¹⁴ **Evam Indrajit**: Hindi translation of Badal sircar's Bangla play by Pratibha Agrawal. Produced by Anamika, Kolkata, directed by Shyamanand Jalan in 1968
- ¹⁵ **Sombhu Mitra** : (1915 – 1997) actor, director, playwright, founder of Bohurupee, recipient of Padmabhushan (1976), Sangeet Natak academy award (1966), Magsaysay award (1976), Deshikottam (1989), Honorary D.Litt. by Rabindra Bharati University & Jadavpur University., Kalidas Samman (1982-83), Karlovy Vary 1957 & Crystal Globe for film 'Jagte Raho' in 1957
- ¹⁶ **National School of Drama** : Theatre training institute, founded in 1959 by Govt. of India
- ¹⁷ **Rajindernath** : (1935 -) Hindi Theatre Director. Founder of Theatre Group Abhiyan in 1977
- ¹⁸ **Eugenio Barba** : (1936 -) Italian theatre director, studied theatre under Grotowsky.
- ¹⁹ **Kumar Roy**: (1926 – 2010) actor, director, author, member of Bohurupee.
- ²⁰ **Rudraprasad Sengupta**: (1935 -), actor, director, translator. Recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1980
- ²¹ **M. K. Raina** : (1948 -) theatre actor & director. Recipient of Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1995
- ²² **Satyadev Dubey** : (1936 – 2011) theatre director, actor, playwright. Recipient of Padmabhushan (2011), Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1971,
- ²³ **Bicchu** : translation of Moliere's play 'Les Fourberies de Scapin' by Wasi Khan, produced by Padatik, Kolkata (1980) directed by Ranjit Kapoor.
- ²⁴ **Bibiyon ka Madrasa**: Hindi play adapted by Pawan Maskara from Moliere's 'School for Wives'. Produced by Padatik (1982), directed by Shyamanand Jalan & Pawan Maskara.
- ²⁵ **Adhey Adhurey** : play by Mohan Rakesh, Produced by Anamika (1970) and by Padatik (1983) directed by Shyamanand Jalan
- ²⁶ **Bansi Kaul**: (1949 -) theatre director, worked on folk forms, Founded theatre group Rang Vidushak, Bhopal (1984), Recipient of Padmashree (2014) Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1995.,
- ²⁷ **Panche Aise aate Hain** : Hindi Play translated by Sarojini Verma from Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi play. produced by Anamika (1971), directed by Shyamanand Jalan
- ²⁸ **Grotowsky** : (1933 – 1999) Polish theatre director and theorist. A leading exponent of audience involvement, he set up emotional confrontations between a limited group of spectators and the actors; the performers were disciplined masters of bodily and vocal contortions.
- ²⁹ **Mahasweta Devi** : (1926 -) Bangla writer and social activist. Awarded Padmabibhusan (2006), Magsaysay (1997) Padmashree (1986), Sahitya Academy Award (1979), Jnapith (1996).



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- ³⁰ **Kavalam Narayan Panikkar** : (1928 -) theatre director, dramatist and poet. Recipient of Padmabhushan (2007) Sangeet Natak Academy award (1983),
- ³¹ **B. V. Karanth**: (1929 – 2002) music director, film director, screen writer, actor, recipient of Padmashree (1981) Sangeet Natak Academy award (1976)
- ³² **Tamrapatra** : translation of Debasish Majumdar’s ‘Amitakshar’ by Santwana Nigam. produced by Vividh Kala Bihar, Kolkata (1981) directed by Sheo Kumar Jhunjhunwala.
- ³³ **Naye Haath** : play by Vinod Rastogi in Hindi, produced by Anamika, Kolkata (1957), direction Badri Prasad Tiwari. The play won the first place in ‘Hindi Natya Pratijogita’ organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi (1959)
- ³⁴ **IPTA** : Indian Peoples Theatre Association, established 25th. May, 1943 associate cultural organization of Progressive Writers’ Association and Anti- Fascist Writers’ and Artists’ Association, inspired by Marxist ideology.
- ³⁵ **Nabanna** : Bangla play by Bijan Bhattacharya (1944), produced by IPTA, directed by Sombhu Mitra.
- ³⁶ **Pathik** : Bangla play by Tulshi Lahiri. staged by Bohurupee, directed by Sombhu Mitra (1949)
- ³⁷ **Kissa Shadi Ka**: Hindi play by Mulraj Rajda, staged by produced by Adakaar, Kolkata. Directed by Kishan Kumar (1979)
- ³⁸ **Katha Ek Kansa Ki** : Hindi play by Daya Prakash Sinha, staged by Anamika (1979), directed by Bimal Lath.
- ³⁹ **Antigone** : play by Sophocles, translated in Hindi by Bhabani Prasad Mishra. Staged by Anamika, directed by Bimal Lath (1982)
- ⁴⁰ **Dharamvir Bharati** :(1926 – 1997) Hindi Poet playwright, writer of ‘Andha Yug’, recognized as a modern epic. Recipient of Padmashree (1972) Sangeet Natak Academy award (1989).
- ⁴¹ **Nadi Pyasi Thi** : Hindi play by Dharamvir Bharati, staged by Anamika directed by Shyamanand Jalan(1957).
- ⁴² **Sangmarmar Par Ek Raat**: Hindi play by Dharamvir Bharati, production- Anamika, direction- Shyamanand Jalan(1956).
- ⁴³ **Neeli Jheel** : Hindi play by Dharamvir Bharati, production- Anamika, direction- Shyamanand Jalan (1962).
- ⁴⁴ **Himalaya Ki Chaya** : Hindi translation of Vasant Kanetkar’s Marathi play by Kusum Kumar, produced by Anamika, direction –ShivKumar Joshi (1979)
- ⁴⁵ **Haanush** : Play -Bhishm Sahani, staged by Anamika 1980, Directed by Ravi Dave.
- ⁴⁶ **Rishte Naate** : translation of Marathi play ‘Sandhya Chaya’ by Jayant Dalvi, translated by Kusum Kumar produced by Adakaar, Kolkata. Directed by Kishan Kumar.
- ⁴⁷ **Ek Din Aadalat Mein** : Hindi translation of ‘Witness for the Prosecution’ by Agatha Christie, produced by Vividh Kala Vihar, Kolkata (1983) directed by Sheokumar Jhunjhunwala.
- ⁴⁸ **Thahara Hua Pani** : Hindi Play by Shanti Mehrotra. Produced by Proscenium, Kolkata (1980), directed by Sheokumar Jhunjhunwala.
- ⁴⁹ **Paperweight** : Hindi Play by Ramesh Upadhyay, produced by Sarjana, Kolkata (1977) directed by Sheokumar Jhunjhunwala.
- ⁵⁰ **Parichay** : Hindi translation of ‘The Roots’ by Arnold Wesker by Usha Ganguli and Madhuri Dikshit, produced by Rangakarmee, Kolkata (1978). Directed by Rudraprasad Sengupta.
- ⁵¹ **Gudia Ghar** : Henrik Ibsen’s play ‘The Doll’s House’ translated by Usha Ganguli and directed by Tripti Mitra, produced by Rangakarmee, Kolkata (1981)
- ⁵² **Maa** : Hindi translation of Gorky’s ‘Mother’ produced by Rangakarmee, Kolkata, (1983) directed by M.K. Raina.
- ⁵³ **Shakuntala** : Original Sanskrit play by Kalidasa ‘Abhijnānaśākuntalam’ translated in Hindi by Mohan Rakesh, directed by Shyamanand Jalan, produced by Padatik (1980).
- ⁵⁴ **Uddhawasta Dharamshala** : Marathi play by Govind Purushuttam Deshpande (G.P. Deshpande),. translated by Vasanta Dev. Produced by Padatik, (1982) directed by Shyamanand Jalan
- ⁵⁵ **Hazar Chaurashi ki Maa** : adaptation and translation of Mahasweta Devi’s Bangla novel, dramatized by Shyamanand Jalan, produced by Padatik, directed by Abhijit Dutta (1978)