

Discussion

A number of responses were directed to Sundar Sarukkai's comments. **Keval Arora** wondered why Sundar Sarukkai had chosen the word “fake” in the place of several other alternatives. Sundar posited a binary, “fake/real.” Where does truth enter this binary, if it does? Keval recalled another moment from Janam's performance, when the actors confront the spectators with photographs, images of the violence and its aftermath. This is another negotiation of the real, but is this framing fake too? What about the poems in the play, the lyricised renegotiations, re-narrativizing of experiences and perceptions? Are they to be termed “fake” as well? **Pravin** made a lengthy intervention, giving many examples. His essential point was that all of us are affected by the violence around us. That violence is in a sense inscribed in our bodies, even if subconscious, even if dormant. What the actor does is to pull out what is inscribed, what may be even subliminal, and give it body. In that sense, what the actor does is totally “real.” It is not “fake.” **Makarand Sathe** asked: was Gandhi's salt satyagraha “fake”? What about the Nazi rallies? What about war itself? These things were all aimed at spectators, so are they “fake” or “real”? Also, how does one characterize some of the theatre taking place in Europe, where they cut their own bodies, sell real blood, and so on?

Sundar Sarukkai responded by asking, why do we give a negative value to the notion of “fake”? He was using the notion of “fakeness” to differentiate theatre from other acts, to understand, as an outsider, what is unique to theatre. There is a long historical tradition in art which represents a fake as something very problematic. After all, you can get arrested if you fake the artworks of major artists. But theatre has a completely different engagement with this notion, where everything you do could conceivably be called “fake,” including the images and poetry that Keval referred to from Janam's play. The common binary is of course with “real,” but this binary doesn't engage sufficiently. In the notion of the “fake” itself there is an engagement with reality at a different level. “There is a presentation of the real in the presentation of the fake. But there is something else which is not there in the fake, and that's not just about the real alone. I'm trying to explore this possibility or re-writing the discourse of the fake, and positing theatre activity as something very uniquely engaged with that activity.” Sundar referred to Gopal Guru's question, can a non-dalit play a dalit role? What gives an actor the right to enter any role? Where does the actor's authority come from? If we believe that acting is something innate and natural, there is a problem with that. This is a question of representation, and part of a larger debate we are having in the social sciences as well. But it is not being sufficiently responded to by theatre practitioners.

Sameera Iyengar asked the question: “What do you do once you're in the theatre? How do you think of yourself, what you want to say and how do you want to say it?” In other words, this has to do with training. Clearly, this is not only about training the body. This is not only about even multidisciplinary in training. In today's time, what sort of training does the actor need to be able to say something about these times?