

Discussions:

GPD : I will also skip the concluding remarks. Having these fascinating accounts from these four , I would have really liked these speakers to give some time for the speakers to react, but that management of time was not possible.in spite of my best intentions or worst intentions. We can say that. It is one thirty now. How long can we go on? Do you want it till two o'clock? Lovely. Nothing like it. All the four accounts on the face of it sound similar but they are not.They are really four different contradictions within our society, and the manner in which they are handled. So that distinction has to be kept in mind. The multifarious kind of resistance activity that theatre seems to conduct everywhere. That was point number one. Number two as a small point of detail which came up in the first part of the discussion; I wanted to raise it at that time I will mention it in passing, the notion of 'sadharaneekaran' that Akshara referred to may not be applicable in this particular case for what may happen because in 'sadharaneekaran' it is some kind of submerging of identity and here, sadharaneekaran of this kind is leading to the emergence of identity. The two are really at cross purposes. The Natyashastra would want the Darshaka or the prekshaka to lose the identity, here the prekshaka emerges with a new identity.So these two are clearly different purposes and it may not be entirely valid to speak of Rasa theory in this context. Not because it is an ancient text but because the context and meanings are perhaps different. But my limited knowledge of Sanskrit text I have nothing more to add and with these words in this half hour, bombard them with questions.

Devi here says that under no circumstance shall she answer any the questions.You can still say, I don't know, In fact that can be the first question to her as why she wouldn't.

Pralayan to

Chandradasan : Can you tell as to what happened in Kerala regarding the plays '*Ningalenne Communistakki*', '*Ningalaare Communistaakki*' and '*Ningal* Communist activity? MORE NAMES OF PLAYS MENTIONED Could you elaborate what it

Chandradasan : This is a specific question and I will answer that. '*Ningalenne Communistakki*' (*You made me a communist*) is a milestone in the whole history of Malayalam performance. It coincided with a the social condition and atmosphere which this play has been really right to be performed.... and the text is available translated. But you know, if you read the text, I have not seen the play in the fifties or sixties. If you read the play now it seems simple. Later in ninties.. nineteen ninety seven or near the year 2000 I saw a performance of this play enacted by O.Madhavan,one of the actors who were acting in the play (earlier way back in the sixties), then the performance speaks much better than the text .And there was a clear demarcation between the way Madhavan acted and other actors, younger actors acting with him. In the old performance that was done in the fifties, it was acted by actors not like Madhavan and it was so well received, and there are other reasons for the success of the play, like the society was ripe and everybody wanted to say that I am a communist or you made me a communist. You know what has happened to India and later you know Civic Chandran himself is a little more toward the left is asking the question 'Whom did you make a communist?' Here *ningal aare communistaakki*.... He posed the question you know, the comrade who has finally

to become minister, is marrying the daughter of the landlord, and the Mala who is coming from a dalit working class section, was very active on and a very important part of the whole story of the revolt, in the play, he has not seen love her love in the play it is a little more love angle also there, finally this one is married to the daughter of Keshavan Nair(Landlord), he drives in a car and becomes the minister after salutations at this point etc. after the raktha sakhi mandapa (martyr square) visiting, so at this point the question becomes relevant after some thirty forty years after the first performance of *ningal enne communistaakki* It tells a point because there is a shift in the way politics is going on now. I have to say that. There is a shift in the new wave politicians, their attitude and their priorities. It is that shift which has been put up by this but we can imagine what kind of discussion and what kind of heated discussion it has created. But again I have to tell that no, the craft with which Civic wrote this play is not as solid as the original text of *Ningalenne Communistaakki* by Thoppil Bhasi. Text. So, the argument is fine and better, the argument is valid but the play does not hold that argument. The text itself means... the text itself defeats the argument. There was a brilliant attempt by one of our young directors Sama Kutty to perform it in the school of Drama Trichur using the whole environment but then this can not be repeated for this production. The other argument you know, '*we made your father a communist*' ('*Ningal ente appane communistaakki*') ...is just a weaker statement than the statement by Civic Chandran through his play *Ningalare Communistaakki*' And I must tell you the whole discussion was initiated by Malyalamanorama the number one bourgeoisie leading newspaper. It was that paper that inflated the discussion, highlighted the discussion and prolonged the discussion, and the discussion has a natural death. Me. Maybe there are different perspectives inside Kerala also

Dorendra: Quite fascinating, interesting to listen to all the responses made by theatre practitioners, their... .. areas of protest, For me, I take the example of break away of IPTA how it dies, how Shambhu Mitra goes away from IPTA certain question of aesthetic excellence demands in the field of theatre being an artform. There is another example for me also the same kind of entries? Coming out of that art work thus it happened in Manipur but Manipur people was colonized by the Britishers in 1891. They dismantled the Govinda Nartana art. An institution under the patronage of the king for the dance forms and other art forms. even the Ras Leela the Gaura Leela are taught. They dismantled it and coming of the proscenium theatre in 1902 was under the guise of Bengali theatre. Bengali orthodox culture in Manipur. It is a challenge that they theatre of Mahiranparva...? started by certain masters who worked in the receding...? Govinda Nartana But that kind of M—'parva? That challenged the British rule entirely?and taken off totally the important traditional cultural art __ of ena—there are others (Shankar Honta?) It goes parallel with the proscenium theatre but with what my understanding comes up with good ok It keeps away? The certain force of protest? The But as an art form the kind of theatre you do, must possess certain aesthetic excellence. It is an art form. only then your kind of theatre will be distinguished its significant identification. On that line how far your endeavour is going ok the protest must be there but building the calm and against that the building of protest is //

It is a theatre what is the aesthetic then how can we locate it as an art form. And at that level how far are you entering into. I have not seen some of your good performances in Tamil they are full of aesthetic excellence and they are... but to me at present to my mind, they lack aesthetic excellence. Can we embrace it to the art of theatre? Being an there must be aesthetic excellence. Then if Shambhu Mitra goes away from IPTA because it lacks aesthetic excellence ... so he started another branch of artistic activity. --
- thank you.

Devi : Is it for me?ok. And I would like to ask is there a standardized form of aesthetics going everywhere? In the same standards? What is aesthetics to you is it the same for tribals in Paderu? ... I am sorry.They have their own set of aesthetics and they have their own having the thing done in their own way.And I don't know how that is measured. And how you separate both the things when you perform. I see as things they perform the things are beautiful to me for them they are .. if you ask them what are the aesthetics of their form which ... what is the form of their protest or the form of their anguish against the digging of the hill, how can both be separated? I don't know and aesthetics of Anantpur dalit is entirely different from the aesthetics of coastal dalits who are expressing themselves through the proscenium space. That is entirely different whereas in venkatampalli they used their own form that is uruluppu that is one of the oldest instrument that was used to announce their protest and uruppu is regarded as one of the most effective instruments in Andhra Pradesh folk forms. And that is used. And how can... I don't know.

Sushama : What Devi is saying is absolutely right.We don't know the norms of the aesthetic, but if you ask a simple question the answer is yes,aesthetically rich theatre we are doing. Otherwise nobody will come to see and nobody will take it as theatre.

Chandradasan: I am just.. I was trying to say an alternative aesthetics.an alternative meaning for theatre. And execution of theatre You can name it by any term.

Devi : My thing is that if you measure it by participation by the audience, or the number of audience attending it, we never have lack for them we always have hundreds or thousands.

Shyamala : As a member of audience of Sushama's performance I want to say something. . When one watches her performance, whether I belong to the urban middle class group or a rural farmer's wife, the kind of experience that she gives me helps me think about the Tamasgeer lady differently, and I think if at all one is talking about sophistication and refinement in technique, it will happen only in terms of the content which is being put across. The kind of dance Sushama will have to use or the kind of song she will have to use can not aspire to get into the classical heights. It's not meant to be that. The performance itself will decide what is the 'draw', what kind of material will get what kind of form.. And the kind of experience that Sushama can generate either in Savitri or Majhya athavaneencha phad the aesthetic of it is built into it and it works. I don't think any prescriptive aesthetic would work . If something say a dance were to be included just to make it beautiful, it will not work.

Ajay : Dakshin this is a question for you, At one end you spoke about the oppression the atrocities which your community has been facing for many years and at the other end you speak of now social acceptance, dignity for living and also a change in attitude. I wish to know whether you have noticed a therapeutic change, some kind of therapeutic help for the community or the people who have been working for you, and I think I would like to extend the same question to Sushama. You have been working with prostitutes and their children. Has there been any kind of visible therapeutic change? Has this theatre worked as therapy for them? What is the response to the acceptance and dignity with which the live now ?

Veena: I think this session has turned very interesting and we all have liked it because of the way he structured it the division he decided to do between the two and the respondents and what we got from the respondents and at least what I got from them is a way to think about or a demonstration about how lower castecultural forms have survived post-1947 period. Three different models or modes almost Devi, Dakshin and Sushama as it were And I was trying to sort of actually connect them up with an observation that Sadanand made that I was a bit sort of confused and perhaps a little disturbed about when he was claiming-perhaps he was not claiming that... that...that in theatre we might have reached a point where --- we can --- having resolved the differences and problems arising out of polarities, and the problem then seems to be as to how to take this to Having heard these three presentations , what was Sadanand trying to say, was he sort of wanting to posit – to have enough examples of contemporary theatre practice. Having engaged with survival of these forms in a way that does not simulate the politics of associating, appropriation or survival.

Sundar : I have enjoyed the presentations. I have a very specific question to Dakshin and a general question to others, To Dakshin, I want to know when one of the performers is taken by the police is there a network of theatre people, what happens in the larger theatre community –does it come in for support when individuals or groups in Gujarat are victimized. Why I ask this question, is because there is a malaise in the Arts community in India. When Hussain is.. then there are sporadic letters and a few people give comments about it but coming together of the larger community to protest is a means of doing that not just among the theatre activists but a network of theatre activists with the larger arts community in India. Have you had examples of such support or is it possible for a theatre forum or how specifically is it possible to get such a national network to support . The eternal question that ---me is this. And it is about the aesthetics. I agree with all the respondents that there is a whole politic of culture itself but let me understand and clarify one question, what is so special about theatre, in the activities that you do, what is in the nature of theatre that captures that activity? The reason I am asking this is that much of the discussion seems to reduce theatre to a utilitarian form, some instrument? Of protest and change. And that's a... why I am saying this is when I was in a seminar, an NGO was working in education in tribal and rural areas, much of their discourse is about how they try and change people and places and so on. And in your own view obviously theatre is doing very empowering work . I am just asking for a larger reflection.. In fact that is my interest. What is it in the nature of theatre that makes this different from giving speeches or telling people their rights. You know, like communication of various

things. What is it in the nature of theatre that makes empowerment possible which is different from direct political speeches or teaching?

Sameera: One of the things ... just a... if I understand from the conversation correctly we are talking about doing theatre and also about redefining alternatively re...aesthetics because that's your need ... My question is about cooperation? Cooption? when you create such alternative aesthetics is there just cooption happen cooperation of the aesthetic happen and if they do, can you talk to us, Pralayan this is for you also actually. How you deal with it when you do the kind of theatre you do. --- --- Just coopting, does someone else coopt the aesthetics? General talk.

Dakshin : The first question about the therapy. Your first question is about the therapy. (Breaks in Hindi) ki theatre me therapy ke taur pe kaam kiya hai kya. Jab theatre practice shuru kiya community me bachchon ke saath. Jab theatre pehale bar practice kiya community mein , uska koi grammar koi logic – kuchh pata nahin tha, bas natak karte ja rahe the aur natak bhi isliye karte ja rahe the ki wo inborn tha, jaise ki maine kaha ki hamare lekin process ke saath saath theatre ke prati commitment, har mushkilon ke bawajud .25.31

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DISCUSSION CONTINUED

Dakshin : Ye mera personal experience hai. Hamare saath me jitney bhi usme kaam kar rahe hai unke maa Baap iska baremein sochate hai. Theatre karte kart andarse eek activism andarse paida ho gaya. Ki hamara samaj ke prati kuchh farz hai agar hamara samaj badnaam hai to door karma chahiye hamare paas theatre ek aisa madhyam hai Hum log dhire dhire ek model ke taur par ubhar rahe the aur log hame- apne bachchonko lekar –hame batate the ki ise natak me le jao nahin to ye ??? ban jayega. To consciously or unconsciously therapy ke taur par theatre ne community me kaam kiya hai.

GPD: --- I started making them actually—the point of it all is all four accounts sound similar on the face of it but they are not. They are really four different contradictions within our society, and the manner in which they are handled. That decision has to be kept in mind. It is simply multiferrous kind of resistance activity that the groups conduct everywhere, number one. Number two was a small point of detail which came up in the first part of the discussion It was not taken up at that time. I will mention it in passing the notion of sasharaneekaran

THERE IS A REPITITION OF THE SECTION OF DISCUSSION. SO I GO TO THE CONTINUITY. AFTER 25 .31minutes of the earlier recording Dakshin continues:

Matlab directly-indirectly inhe hairan karne ka police ka –yeh sab ho raha the lekin theatre karte karte pata nahee commitment aa gaya ki hame sab kuchh ---chahiye lekin theatre naheen chhodna chahiye. Ismese kiseene koi paisa naheen kamaya –bhee nahee kiya, lekin ek commitment dheere dheere atee gayee, aur jab bhee police- legal case aa gayee hai fortunately jab---hua aur pandrah din ek achchhaa sa experience leke aye to –

actually main aur mera baap dono saath me the. Baap mere liye bahot bada support tha kyunki unhone pehle (jail dekh?) chuke the. See, is waqt south se K. Satchidanand, Mahashweta Devi, Dr. Ganesh Devi Baroda se, Bhupen Khakkar –se Char paanch logo ne ek statement issue kiya. Koi aur naheen tha koi theatre activist—aur hamein bhee pata nahee tha ki agar is tarah ke koi case hota hai to hamein theatre activist ke paas jana chahiye. Unhe pata chala unhone letters likhen unhone statement issue Times of India me hua aur baad me thodi awareness aye judicial system me thodasa pressure hua hoga ki bahot hee serious charges lagaye gaye the mujhpar aur pandrah din baad chhoda gaya tha. Sandip ko jis waqt teen maheene band kar diya to us waqt pehli baar kisee denotified community ke bachche ke liye mainstream society ne - Bhalchandra Joshi iske Principal hai C.U. Shah arts College hai uske Principal – unhone notarize kiya apna statement- pehli baar –Sou saal ki history me pehli baar kisee outside community se kiseene chharas ke liye statement diya ki yeh achchhe hai. To koi bada theatre activist nahee hoon main, Kuchh hua chhut put --- ---???

Sadanand: Veena, just to give quickly about what you said. The idea of evolving or evoking identities in an auditorium or inside a performing space and then attempting to, striving to take that outside, does not in any way negate the assertion of difference. I think that's what we have heard this afternoon, that extraordinary effort struggle to assert the difference but if assertion of difference just leads to perpetuating some kind of fragmentation, then obviously that's not what one is talking about so voice---??? Is an aspect of integrity, an aspect of dispersion and I think the whole point is being made here and I think it is politically a strong point that is emerging that for the first time hearing the vocalization of the difference then will have to speak to the larger society in a contentious manner it can't be you know..in a manner of. you know..come to a performance and consume it as ??? they would a commercial play. Good? I think that's what the individual struggle is for everyone ...Outside the commercial and outside the circuit of the attempt to –what you call it—to do social service- outside this the politics of this would be something that the day-to-day engagements with the voices that spoke here but everyone sitting inside the auditorium.as a part of this symposium. How do you position then in relation to any kind of –this is not just theatre today??? What you write and what you do with ??? and what you do with music today and with the common thing you know...I strongly believe that if the stage can resolve ---kind of those tensions then it has to transmit itself outside in a manner that while asserting difference, you are also able to make a collectivity.

Pralayan: Actually I would like to answer Sameera's question. Actually, the Tapatam the sound tappu has its connotation of rebellion and everything. But we keep open our eyes that anything can be appropriated in any action. See what happened, the tapatam, they performed in Washington white House on July 4, 2004. In front of the White House, the same tapatam of Tamilnadu and also now the practice among the NGOs? They conducted workshops with traditional performers for three days and then the NGO started to teach all the kind of artists who were working with the NGO started teaching tapatam...--atam mayilattam---atam. There is small difference. If you have tappu and doing .movement then it is tapatam If you have a ?? doing movements it is...atam. The distinction and

nuances everything has been lost. So it happened. You should be aware of that you should be very careful about it...

General talk

Some announcements please..