

GP Deshpande: I would much rather postpone it to the end, and that too, if time permits. We have two papers: First is Gopal Guru, who teaches Political Science at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. It is said about Political Science... One Nobel Laureate was once asked as to why there is no Nobel Prize for Political Science. His answer was, why, there already is one for Imaginative Literature. In one sense that is what Gopal Guru is going to talk about, Imaginative Literature as imagined by the people, their identity. With these words, over to Gopal.:

Gopal: Thank you Gopu. We call GPD as Gopu in Maharashtra. Please let me share that with this larger audience! Thank you for the nice words. I take this opportunity to thank the organizers for inviting me to share my views with you this morning. I am aware of the the same spirit of Apoha tradition and I am not a theatre person. Neither have I thought about it in a sustained manner. I am like a hit-and-run kind of person. So don't take me seriously if I am not making a point. Whatever I am going to say may have already been said. Therefore it may not make any deep sense to you.

There are three ways of looking at scholarship these days. I have no time to go into those three ways, I would just mention them, They are pathologies in a way, one is fashion, fascination and Faith. I will talk only about faith. As we are genetically modified, there would be genetically modified intellectuals; I am not going to talk about them. Faith involves that you are the part of that reality- here reality means reality that is articulated and communicated through theatre and its forms and it is an important form. I can not just stay away from that activity. I have been reading about Marathi theatre, particularly Dalit theatre- though there has been no mention and I do not want any rhetorical accommodation of it...in this theme., but I do something about Dalit theatre when I studied.. folk theatre? No, mudhouse theatre- that's the word I have used somewhere.. I wrote a longish essay on the Kalapathak tradition in some parts of Maharashtra- So to that extent I feel related to this activity, so accept me with kind and generous heart.

I am therefore going to talk about the title circulated here: Identity in search of Identification through Theatre. Both the words are important, I am not going to explain them to you- identity and identification- I do believe that Identity is not enough to state some reality, reality become .. A full reality became a part of your thinking and becomes a full reality when it takes form through Identification. Identification is, therefore an important part of making sense of Identity. And as Shoumikda was talking yesterday about a seamless experience – unless you connect identity and identification, you can not really realize that seamless experience. I am ghettoed in one Dalit theatre and one thing at Shantatai – that in that Mulgi Jhali Ho- is it theatre or just a play- by Jyoti Mhapsekar and others... so you are ghettoized in those small pigeonholes, and you can exist there and you can pay occasional attention to you but you can't try to identify with ourselves. That identity becomes a liability and not an asset. In order to become an asset, you have to attach an identification with it. There is some strength and weight on the stage and therefore detached from all the specificities to that through identification. Therefore identification is a terribly moral act, and therefore identity and identification are very very important. When I say this , it is an ethical act that one is doing with oneself and with others, which I don't know how much it happens to theatre... you run a very great risk when you identify. Identification may have a fragmentary effect on your theatre. There are two people as far as I can see, I can see many, but will mention only two, Sudhanva and Gopu. They don't worry about fragmentary impact and just go on to make plays like Shambook and Satyashodhak two important plays that these two theatre personalities without really caring about fragmentary impact I would allow

myself ...my identification , the incremental contribution to my identity can be very small, to the extent that I don't jeopardize my own interest. These two personalities are not afraid to do that. Satyashodhak is the first play by a Brahmin about a non-Brahmin. It is greatly empowering at some level. We have a very strong theatre tradition in Maharashtra, not a single non Brahmin playwright write about Satyashodhak that is Jotiba Phule's engagement with reality and imagination. So to that extent these two people will not worry about what will the party think about it. So there is no fragmentary impact. This is a candid confession. Now I believe, I wanted to first draft of my abstract and Sudhanva did not respond favorably. He thought that something is wrong with my thinking. When I went back to him and he said don't use technical language-not that I am capable of using it, but he asked me to avoid that. The simple question is, who can really play whose role? Who has the right to play anybody's role? Can I walk into any role... just because I am a dalit, do I have an automatic right to play a dalit role. If I am a woman automatically I have the right to talk about women., on behalf of women. Is that automatic? I don't think so not in case of acting. Actually acting .. I was talking to Sundar in the morning session that acting is much more profound way to say something than representation. We can discuss this at some point. I make a distinction between acting and representation. I would submit for your consideration acting is a universal act in the sense that anybody in any caste, religion, gender can play any role. There is no gatekeeping, no censorship so to say you can't impose it. And this is again because acting is done, is an aspect an abstract exercise that you are acting on the stage not as a sociological, anthropological identity presenting or representing an idea. You are acting enacting an idea.on the stage and therefore detached from all the specificities of reality. To that extent I think that acting is abstract and an idea and not identity.. You can walk into any role without hesitation. I am making the political point later but because this is an idea abstracted from reality you are entitled to play the role, which may not be sociologically identified with you. That's why you can play different roles...mentally. Men could play women's roles, the differentiated... ..This is one consideration.

The second one is your acting does not become objectionable on the grounds of your particularity because you are committed to certain notion of truth and you are also committed to throw up the meaning to be derived from that truth. I will take an example now. I am drawing upon what Aijaz was saying yesterday if poverty and is the truth and it is because of globalization in some way, I should be able to know that truth and act on that truth on the stage.and the truth to be drawn from that is the neo-Imperialism that was mentioned as emerging. As long as I am aware of it and I can articulate it, it does not matter what caste or gender I belong to. I need not be belonging to a specific social reality. So that therefore is important, there are two conditions that are important, one is the meaning of the truth and ideas universal engagement. Now I can add four on anyone's behalf, there is no problem. But is it a sufficient condition? And there are problems with this position I am taking now. One is that I may have universal claims,I may act on anybody's behalf- women dalit, tribals- Now I am not talking about identity but ideas.I am doing universal one. But there can be a cunning in this universalism. Let me give an example.For some odd reason I was called by the LalBahadur Shastri Academy Mussorie. They were looking for a judge to judge some performances there. I was one of the judges at the theatre performances there. There was one theme and and the performers were doing that around Gudiya.You know Gudiya's case, U.P.Now the question is, who was acting on that theme Gudiya? I did some work for those people who have some different linkages.Now that you are picking it up and it looks like a promising universal idea of reforming... gender justice and all that.Looks attractive and all that. But who are the people

doing it? What was their intention? Every expression has an underlying intention. I found out later that they were some who had the saffron leaning. They were performing but the idea was to shame the people sitting in front. I saw three or four people sinking in their chairs. Therefore there is cunning in this universalism. When you are performing, idea is universal but what you are extracting out of it. Therefore I have to qualify that not all that acting that universal is benign and innocent. That is how I thought I should speak something about this...this benignness of universalism. I think that has to be ...problematized the benignness of universalism and acting as universal enterprise. Enterprise is not the right word but I am using it because I can not find a good word for it.

The other one is the structure. We talked about the structured spaces. And I am going to argue that the structures themselves are not intimidating or humiliating. They are innocent, empty of meanings. Once you hang some paintings on this a grafting is done on the wall, that structure acquires meaning. Since you are acting on the stage, that acting assigns some meanings to the stage. Otherwise they are empty of meaning. Any structure. Structures become powerful-South Block becomes powerful because people are sitting there. Secretariat. The point for discussion would be are they really friendly, benign? Or they are also organized by the hierarchical principle. Therefore I think that structures howsoever benign and universal you are, universal normative consent you are, you are acting through the theatre, you can not avoid structures acquiring, intimidating, humiliating character. And there is a phenomenological view in this. I am sorry I am using this word, I am not getting other words. Suppose a play is being staged in one theatre, I know the play, and I shall decide whether I should visit or not. If it is causing me an embarrassment I would stay away. And I think I am familiar with your debate Sudhanwa-with somebody about Kachara in Lagaan Look at the fellow he is wretched crying helpless creature I won't go there. I wouldn't visit that. I will stay back. It is a tragic thing. The freedom of going is already snatched from me because the structure is causing me embarrassment so I will stay away. And if it is Ambedkar, I will go with a three piece suit. Very very empowering for me because I am safe. and I have seen twenty seven people in Pune watching that movie with protocols. I was asking the Vice Chancellor who took me by mistake. Why are these twentyseven people dressed in three piece suit? Ambedkarlike. Very very empowering. It can cut both the ways but you know, you have to keep this in mind when you revisit our movement. That is the task. That is my humble suggestion. How free democratic and egalitarian structures could be to remove this sense of tragic imagination so that you can walk freely into a theatre and watch it freely. Is that the guarantee that one is offering through this reimagining the moment? That's the point. I will make two points in five minutes

One is the responses from the audience; I am not holding that he or she is already elevated. He or she has become an idea. But those people who are accessing the actor do not access him as an idea. Suppose I am playing a buffoon and buffoon from a lower caste then the laughter is louder. There is already a hierarchy of responses in the audience and that's why there can't be a seamless experience for me but the reality is that all kinds of people walk into the hall with all kinds of intentions, expectations and aspirations. Now, once the laughter is up, perhaps for what happens to people who are also part of that reality what is their body language?... .. Are you not causing designated embarrassment to them? Through the anonymous theatre it is designated embarrassment... you have to be very careful in the sense that you have to be very careful when you are releasing your responses and that was the point Shoumikda was making, how can you do it. I think I will make one point, two points- one that you can do it and I will say shortcircuiting my argument that you have to develop a capacity to effectively identify what is

reflective identification... and there are other kinds... I am not going in those details...One is reflective identification and that is a big job that will have to do with civil society. When I walk into the Hall I must walk out of my role if I am a Brahmin stepping out from the role and stepping into some other's role. And not only that, I also evaluate my role as a Brahmin the role of a ptr or whatever and then only you can restrain your responses. Otherwise you are not associated with that reality therefore you can still tend to laugh oh my God! There is also a politics of laughing.:When to laugh, how to laugh how much to laugh and all that... ..

And the last point is that this is the anonymous situation that you have about the intimate the assertion you make that just because you are not accommodated into all this it is intimidating humiliating for different reasons and you have intimate.it was already presented here by NINASAM Intimate is the assertion --- --- and there is dalit theatre... and which is therefore for those people it is an assertion that we have arrived but differently. With the same aspirations of changing the world. And I have a different analogy for the post-modernist language ... -- .. and I agree with you Sudhanwa that there are nine points- I have studied that document which led to the sluggishness of this movement.I will not go into it, but the dalit movement is sluggish in Maharashtra now. It was very powerful at one point of time but now it has receded into background.--.. and because of... and Ford Foundation was one and all that.the lesson ...spoiled your habits that's all.Sorry that I have to state what it is. And so arrival of the intimate or the intervention – I am using this code language I have no time...Above all it is very empowering and on one hand it is designated embarrassment and the other is designated empowerment.You feel so empowered.Halgeri... Akshara,what is it called in Karnatak.. the dalit wada..? Valgeri well that's it. Very empowering.You can mimic anybody, you can ridicule the upper class character. very empowering. Anonymous is mutual respect and this is theatre is for self respect because intimate you are asking questions to yourself. The self is deeply involved in this intimate.and you are trying to resignify this self through the intimate because there is no pressure on you. And I think this resignification is the work therefore they will produce different meanings on untouchability. For you it is a problem, for them it is a great source, resource.and they would say and I just quote Baburao Bagul saying 'Sun is untouchable' and that is the very powerful resignification in the theatre and therefore it is very very empowering assigns some respect. It is not the contempt... .. and this is because he is not revolting.He is withdrawing not revolting. The body language of Kachra in Lagaan is something... I don't know how to say... it is restless two emotions are immediately released- one is rage and the other is self contempt. It is outrageous what is this he is not revolting I better be away from this and not be part of it.rage is productive finance will take care of it later... and let me not go into it... Thank you.