

Reaction Gopal & Pralayan

Gopal: The main shift is from identity to identification. First part of that dalit literature was about ..to say it very simply we are not like you. The later part of Devnuru Mahadeva is to say we are also like you but in a different way. that was the second part where the trajectory went from here to there.Are you actually implying this when you say identity and identification?one, and is there...are you trying to map something which is parallel in dalit theory to this shift from identity to identification and when you come to this the second related question is when you come to this part of identification it comes tantalizingly close to the natyashastra theory of sadharaneekarana .When we forget, especially when you said to get away from your identity when you enter a theatre hall and then you become an open person, a real prekshaka when you receive a theatre performance. You know the ... what you are implying .. is.. comes very close to the theory. Would you like to be identified with it or would you still make a distinction between rasa theory and your position?

GPD : Sudhanwa wants to

Sudhanwa : um.. actually prof. Gopal guru I found your presentation very exciting. And provocative in the best sense of the term. Thank you very much. Um... in particular, I find very empowering ...not embarrassing...not only the idea that the act of acting itself can be empowering. Now you posed the question and.... Isn't it...you talked of the cunning of universalization, the fact that acting is universalizing universalization.. and it is complicated by the idea of the cunning.of universalization but my question to you would be, ... there is a lovely poem by ...by Pablo Neruda where he talks about the chief of a tribe and he lists about thirty different things that he did. He became sharp as an arrow became ...like a wind etc etc. and only then he was worthy of his people. Now is there such a thing that an actor also has to do ...When can an actor become worthy of the role that he has to play..If that does not happen if the actor is not worthy of the role that he is playing then isn't there also a danger of a certain kind of voyeurism maybe? A certain kind of simplification which is not done with cunning It's not the question of Hindu right wing saying something about practices among the muslims in ot order to...you know that's not how it happened but isn't it also important to become worthy of a role.?

Sadanand : I am glad you and Akshara have raised important questions because it is Gopal leading from your presentation the whole idea of identity on the one hand and evacuation of identity on the other, and the polarities of the two sort of play between the two need, some need some reflection. Like Akshara says this sadharaneekarana idea in Natyashastra which talks about ??? There is a whole description of how you build a theatre and the theatre then is designated as abode of death and the prekshaka is entering the abode of death In the abode of death, there is no identity so in all these traditional Kuthumbalam you see a lot of bhutas and pretas all built into the architecture. You are entering that house, you are abandoning your identity outside.And you are neutralizing and entering into it which includes an injunction for the actors too, So the idea of becoming worthy is also a matter of being able to shed identity.Evacuation of identity where you pose the question, who can act as who and who can ???for whom... which are the main planks of identity politics in India. Can a Brahmin leader speak for a dalit cause, and a man speak for a woman and so on and so forth. It leads into all kinds of twists and turns, So this is on the one hand, and on the other hand to connect it with

what Pralayan was saying about the segregation of audiences? Spaces of performance it was in interior Tamilnadu. We have the very provocative provoca... very provocative proposition by Prof. Shivtambi who looks at the history of cinema theatre as opposed to stage theatre, and how in the cinema theatres the first equalization of castes happened. He starts his historical research...(SOME Q) no this is cinema 1928 onwards, the first cinema theatre was built in Tamilnadu in 1928, from that point on, today Tamilnad has the largest number of cinema halls, both fixed cinema halls and touring cinema in the whole of India. I think just about ten years ago Andhra went maybe ten theatres more but in Tamilnadu...??? Huge infrastructure of cinema halls which according to ShivThambi was the caste leveler and which paved the way for the Dravidian movement to pick up in the thirties and forties and this kind of linked up with these two linked up with this in an interesting kind of way and I thought

Pravin : I am just adding a bit to what Sudhanwa and Sada just now said regarding who can represent whom. A lot of time in theatre it happens that they are not just representing characters. Sometimes we play the character when we are asked to empathize. While it is always fantastic for us to empathize with great heroes, suppose you had to play Nathuram Godse or a Hitler, or ??? and you had to defend your character, in order to present him better which means in order to understand that man better you have to get inside his head you know, you have to defend the character. So that the other characters can stand around you and then create the argument. So there is a complexity in that situation. From an actor's point of view. The other thing is just small one of the experiences we had jahan ???acting you know more of us should come up with anecdotes and experience because that may be enriching as a ...??? And one of the experiences is..some of ..experiences in villages we had this problem of you know, if we performed in the village , you know the people from ..dalit colony wouldn't come and you know if you performed in the dalit colony the villagers would not come you know. We selected a place in the middle, and then people came from both sides but they sat on two sides leaving a big strip in the middle. So you know we were having to act facing one side and then the other (laugh) and then staging the frontal to the other side. The silver lining was, eventually the children started coming into the middle, and you know, coming closer to the stage, and they were all sitting together in the centre. That was the nice thing that happened. That's all

GPD: One more please.(General talk)

Ramanujam?: It's a point I want to share with both the papers. In connecting both the paper there, I want to give information. We have to see Pralayan was saying about the tappu and I remember, tapalu was played only during the death ??? in Tamilnadu. But in their own community ???TALK INAUDIBLEopportunity came to me from South zone cultural centre they asked me to train some actors ...they would give six months ???college...??? experiments...?? I

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If you give me opportunity, I will train tappu people better them and give them opportunity to perform in other ... That I think Pralayan knows the history, Now that Rangrajan group has become an important group going to all over India, but all over the world also. Tappu gets an important place now. Now what happened...only one thing and I ...Tappu is owned by another group now all the ladies are doing all the ...are?? Now the tappu ???Suppose twenty Brahmins own the tappu the art may be promoted, but the identity will be held? It would be the identity as? An article to be held??? This is my question.

Madhuri : My name is Madhuri and I would like to direct my question to Gopal Guru (referring to?) yesterday's presentation by Aijaz as well as Sadanand. I am thinking about different terms basically. As I said theatre can be looked at as an agent of revolutionary change to be brought into society and then Sadanand added it in his presentation when he was talking about experimental theatre yesterday, Experimentation as a point of departure, for (creation of ?) transformational meaning etc. but through conversations ---so cultural changes revolutionary changes on one hand on the other it happens to (engage in?) ...conversational processes then I am trying to relate it to your presentation you saying identity and identification being two sides of the same coin, may be different areas altogether. And then how actors at one point can feel empowered while acting certain roles. I am just thinking if it is to be a conversational process like ...if the experience of theatre is to be palatable by the audience needs to have certain harmonious process going on inside in the auditorium but on the other hand you are also looking at revolutionary agency which brings in revolutionary changes, so how is that possible? This is one question and how can you locate the pressure of identity of actors as well as the audience? On what platform could all of them come together? And what could be the result of that. So my question can be simply put as Can theatre be really looked at as an agent of revolutionary change or is it only a space, a locale maybe adds up to the revolutionary processes going on otherwise in the society? Is it the ?? or ??? Yeah Thank you.

Pralayan: OK. Actually I will respond to Sadanand actually Prof. Shivthambi studying Tamil cinema and society he sites he quotes one example This is the first time in Tamil society all the Tamil speaking people got into a single umbrella as an audience in a cinema hall. That's the truth. Here in cinema halls all over Tamilnad when the film begins there is the darkness, the lines are divided according to the rates. ??? ---??? ... means divided into half paisa...? So it happened for the first time and for Tamil society this is...but what some historians say in nineteenth century when Parsi theatre came ???all the vilasnadagam ??? also doing performance touring all over Tamilnad and staying in a village and having temporary thatched roof ??? and everything and they invite the audience and in the audience also the ..it happened that the caste lines were crossed situation also. ??? the touring theatre called here the mobile theatre so all those names are attached to the film halls now. Wherever you see in Tamilnad villages, they are saying touring theatre. There the touring theatre means the cinema halls. Actually that name is popular ???by the touring Parsi groups This is the situation and I would like to say some...see why I actually the topic is totally about discourses about the identities know? Most of our discourses happen in a ...in Tamilnad also the spokespersons for culture, theatre does not know what happened in Tamilnadu. Just as most of the Indians don't know what happened in India like that most of the Tamilians don't know what happened in Tamilnadu. See, today the spokespersons are from theatre and who are active in media and everything they does not know what happened in Chennai itself. See, I cite only one example. If you see any any...there are strong debate about the media, print media, the problems of working women. They have to work in the house, they have to go out...and problems of working women and problems of working women See, you have to find out... you have to identify, you have to know the word working woman actually excludes 70 % of Indian m??s They are doing agricultural work they do not know the word working woman. They are not working women they are working women those who know the word working woman. It totally excludes the reality of the Indian situation. They are working they don't know working woman, housewife, they don't know these two words. Actually middle

class upper class Pointer? Being the order of the day and it reflects in all the discourses. Not only in theatre, in all the social political cultural discourses. Thank you.

General talk

Gopal: Thank you very much for your thought provoking interventions. (some inaudible matter) I don't think I can give full treatment to all the questions that were directed to me but let me try and shall we say... Akshara I think you had already raised??? I do not know whether ??? my agenda to develop a dalit theory of theatre. Anyway I am not just as I mentioned to you ... he is not... take it seriously but I think it has resonance with what ??? has been thinking about it know? Ah thinking about it I am just putting it in this fashion thinking about dalit is the necessary condition but not the essential condition of developing theory. The route to Go to larger universe of ideas is through dalit ??? and to that extent I am with Devnuru??? And therefore I think there is a resonance with what I am thinking. The second point is about is there a ..something like parallel theory of theatre I have already answered this question but you know what we are doing, some of us ??? encircle the established concepts It's an encirclement. Not the peeping hole. Encirclement I think we are creating a ring and people who are with us in this encirclement I can see them here. So that's the way modestly we are encircling the establishment be it in social sciences, be it in philosophy and theatre and then if we want some people to join us in that circle then So that's the very very modest, it looks very modest effort?? Therefore this question I think Madhuri ... it is about you know actually it is the precondition you know for revolutionary activities that happen outside the theatre but the necessary homework is done in the theatre. And therefore I think you have to achieve some kind of a ... you have to shed the rough edges of dispute... personality in theatre that's why theatre plays a very important role and that's why your study circles and cadres and all that is part of theatre actually. And theatre has been a very generic concept I suppose we have to discuss it again, so I would think that you know... ??? ... ??? and the theory of ??? may be there in the Natya shastra, I have not studied, I am studying on humiliation and I had some access to AbhinavGupta asserting??? I can't make a conclusive remark on this but we have a theory of assertion in Indian Natyashastra of course we don't need to borrow it from outside I think this is a necessary condition to understand the reception of what is happening on the stage. Aah maybe I would expect that to happen in theatre. Sudhanwa's is typical you know Is there an experiment you require stages to achieve, to be worthy of any act, therefore I would give you this... the probation is on all the time he or she is on probation. That probation period is all the time happening because you know you are not able to grasp what is happening outside That total confidence that I arrive with another statement of reality. And with that it is a probation all the time but you know I would make this comparison between the dalit and the non-dalit actor, Dalit would have a very advantageous position that he or she would experience acting at two levels in the sense that he or she would be acting to resist racist...??? There is no naming. Akshara was trying to frame me where is my location ? I want to escape it seriously. Every dalit actor is also acting with the immediate reality you know, dalit woman hitting this gauda or patil she is not naming her acting. It is experience. The other is the experience that is ...??? Accepted one. You are also going through your own experience through mediated through concept. I am not very sure this is the privilege which is enjoyed by the non-dalit. In order therefore to go back to the immediate, we will have to go for perfection. Stages you are suggesting. Therefore there is the journey back to that reality. So that's how and I am giving very confusing answer to your question--- I said ...??? You can think the last of the ... you can make use theatre as a rather meeting ground. That is a possibility and should we evacuate this

identity or share it I think we have to evacuate and create this identity and that can be ---??? I wanted to discuss this labour power and acting. actual ...but I am not going to...I would share my power ...??? Sorry sorry I think I have done. Thank you.

General talk

Shiv Viswanathan: Can I make one...Can I become a Brahmin mongoose because I think your concept was very important. Cunning of universalism. You posit four things but take only two. That is, somewhere for you, faith is redeeming. Therefore I think it is a very important concept. The first stage is ...say, as a dalit ... ??? I am like you. Next stage, you say I am like you but different. Third which is still ... identity at the third stage you are saying I am like ...both of us are...with a different vision, but you are not able to say the fourth statement, every other is me.... Every other is me.... ... no. because you are ...(poor?) because your drama can take you to two and a half but can the politics take you to the four. (... ...???) No actually it is very interesting. It is a reaction everytime a dalit (...???) yesterday... even your body language.. how can a person be so.. even eight ... ??is an important part of the (resumption?) and I think you have to go more open on it. Though not on the personal, you are also the cobra....No I think it is important because I think we tend to evade ...ptive features of certain kind of violence. And I think theatre is/plays an important part piecing that with a different kind of orga..??

Lynne Henry: I am sorry I have been listening to everything for the past few days and I felt today, if I remained silent today it would be on my conscience. When I heard Sudhanwa's on the first day, I felt a sense of hope. And today morning when I saw the topic I had some more hope. And today through this discussion I am feeling very happy and there is a lot of hope in me. I lived for eight years in Saudi Arabia and that is one place where there is no theatre and I have spoken to people from the government, people from the munasif ...people there and they have a very clear idea of why they don't want a theatre space in Saudi Arabia, they simply don't want people to meet in any open forum where they can communicate with each other.because they feel there is a possibility that of dissent that would arise out of that you know out of that meeting. And therefore there is no theatre space there at this moment and what...when... you talk of theatre which matters or ...or Does theatre matter? Those questions are irrelevant to me you know It is clearly is this monarchy identifies what theatre space can do, to see its power and clearly, theatre does matter, spaces like this do matter. And therefore the speakers from yesterday who were talking about locating or mapping theatre locations within India, I would want you to help me find theatre you know if you can help me find the map going through finding this theatre that theater, and about today's discussion the question are you worthy of being an actor or when does an actor become worthy of playing a certain part or a role... at a very superficial level you know, ...borrowing? from Marlon Brando or may be Al Pacino's conversation with Dustin Hoffmann they were shooting at a place and Marlon Brando or Al Pacino met Dustin Hoffmann and they asked what happened why are you looking so flustered? You know, and Oh I haven't slept for two days because you know I am playing this particular scene in which I have to look that I haven't slept for two days. So then Marlon Brando says ok then why don't you try some acting for a change? You know...but at a deeper sort of level of who is worthy of playing characters rather than playing roles...if you are a woman who can understand a man whose has ??? ...???

Seeds in it? If you understand that man...’s ID? And if as a man you understand the fear of a woman who goes out on her own carrying not a sense of being robbed, not a sense of being cheated, but the fear of rape if you understand those fears then I mean you certainly are worthy of ...playing those parts. This is what I have to say. I want to thank you.As a person who is primarily a dalit it is important to talk not just about atrocities on dalit but about women who are dalit, bisexual women, who are dalit and just... possible???

GPD: Last question Sadanand.

General talk

Raghunandana : I am responding to Gopal Guru and partly to what Shiv said. See this thing from...supposing in the theatre, when I am teaching or directing, an actor, working with an actor I say look now we are actors first now am I a Brahmin first, and an actor next, Am I a dalit first, a gauda first, a lingayat first and an actor next? No. Here, you are an actor. And your lingayat heritage your Brahmin heritage dalit heritage –whatever heritage that you have –will come in, all the richness of it will come in to make you an actor and then only then will you become worthy of people because you are working for the whole of the universe which is why this *Angikam bhuvanam yasya* is so important to all of us even if you don’t recite it , the prayer, the notion of that is very important not only for people who actually recite that in Sanskrit or any other language of the world but all over the world it is important for people who work in the theatre. So that is one thing. The other thing is to problematize what Pravin was saying , if you are playing Hitler, you don’t have to defend Hitler because there is always that critical distance that you maintain.And through your acting, you are criticizing Hitler. There would be points where you will have to understand Hitler... ??? no no no. Let me complete. To empathize is not to sympathize.There is a world of difference when you empathize you deepen your understanding of why that character is acting in a certain way that is why when we say you are playing Rama or Ravana you are not playing Rama because there is no living person ...???that never was. What you are playing is Ramatva, a certain understanding of Ramatva or Ravanatva. Or Hitleratva. And that is bring on stage. So that is a very important (image?) and that will result in sadharaneekarana. Otherwise it will result in samanyeeekarana ..

GPD :Now the last question

Sadanand : Yeah I just want quickly to bounce off Shiv also as he came up with advaitic solution ... The issue really is you are faced with this particular problematic. Problematic is either from ancient times or today’s it is possible to resolve the differences inside an auditorium. What happens outside? How come this resolution of differences – no matter how brief it is however brief it is , it is not able to transcend the walls and be reflected in society and therein lies the specific crisis of theory and practice today. It is not just theatre of identity crisis, the identity politics.So it’s not able to jump out of the enclosures that have been created. So for me the issue is where will those slippages happen ? What you resolve on stage can also happen that you can experience outside

Gopal intervenes : No this is important. I mentioned encirclement and not enclosure..much enabling term. You know what happens? It would be a very desirable thing that I see somebody

like me and me like somebody. That is you are collapsing all the ...? ries and contradictions... I never become you, I become we ultimately. So there is threatening of hierarchy. Now the question is you know the enclosure, the fencing is not deliberately created it is imposed from above. And you know that's why I think the responsibility of the others is to see that it's not the enclosure which is produced by somebody by dalit identity politics, I am also morally equally responsible in creating the enclosure. I am existentially really responsible therefore my moral responsibility is to ask really questions to myself before I ask a question to the enclosure. Enclosure is not independently ...??? From outside it is partly actually we can call this enclosure a margin and in the margin to function to sustain the dominance. Sustain the totality of social dominance in a way, I think the logical relationship between the enclosure and the outside is has to be understood and I think that's the only way to become we.rather than the ...ry? Thank you.

GPD: Now may I request the other four who are waiting for too long,