

Sanjoy Ganguly: About globalization

To tell you very frankly I am really nervous because I am not a good speaker, but I will just try to articulate what I have thought. So if you ask me how we see the new reality from our experience. It is basically the first thing that we have been noticing, that in our society we are asked to be robotised. You cannot have thoughts, your own thoughts. So thought is not dynamic in this society. So there is a thought delivered by the media, by the system and you have to accept that as your own thought. So there is no conflict between thought and thought. So thought is not dynamic so there is no intellectual progress. It's a kind of robotization. When Akshara was saying about television I think television is also an instrument that has been continuously trying to robotise us. So when we see that the system is trying to robotise us, we also see the same thing when we see our political culture, be it a political party or non-party, we want to make people our blind followers. They will be following us blindly and we will lead the procession. So basically this is one big thing that we have been noticing, this trend of robotising human beings is taking place and at the same time when we look at our reality we see that even the concept of liberty has changed because if you have to enjoy the liberty you have to be isolated, you have to be selfish. Like the economic independence is very often interpreted as freedom. Like when I am speaking here I am restricting myself as a speaker, so therefore I am isolated from the audience and this isolation is making me, you know I am not feeling free by being isolated. So for us the freedom means to be connected. But in the new reality the freedom means if you have the right to consume more, then you are free. So this is happening and at the ground level for e.g. we have been working with the rural agricultural workers, marginal peasants, where you see that for e.g. the education the quality does not exist in the rural education system. And particularly where you see the large number of tribals and scheduled caste people are living, you don't see any quality there. Nowadays if you look at the public distribution system, because lot of people they have got money so as a process of self selection they are going to buy crops from the market. So only the people who have nothing are going to the ration shops, so there is no quality in the public distribution system. And the moment the prices went up because the government of India decided not to maintain stock in the food corporation, they handed over to the private entrepreneurs, so therefore the prices went up. So the people at the higher level when they found the prices are going up they went to the ration shop and they didn't find anything. So they started creating violence so at that point the politicians and the government they started thinking of the PDS, they started thinking of the quality that should be brought in the public distribution system. In West Bengal if you see the per capita production has increased from 14000 Rupees to 20000 Rupees. But even then the capitalists are not satisfied. They are saying that you have to reduce the wages of the workers. So the average wages from 51000 rupees in a jute mill industry, the average wages from 51000 has gone to 41000, 10000 less, average yearly income has decreased. But the per capita has increased, but the workers are not getting, their wages are decreasing. In this case the trade unions if you see, they are not bothered about it, they are just engaging themselves to recruit the contract labourers. So you have to pay to the union leaders then you can be inducted as a contract labourer. So wherever you go at the policy level they are determining the policy, so they are saying that if you have 2400 calories then you are not below poverty level. So if you have less than 2400 calories you are below poverty level. So to buy 2400 calories per head per family you need at least 567 Rupees as Prabodh Patnaik and Utsav Patnaik has described. So in a family of six

members if you have to go above poverty level, then you have to have an income of let's say 3000 to 3500 rupees. And from that point of view 80% people should be below poverty level. But the government has instructed to the surveyors that there should not be more than 27% people below poverty level. So wherever you see there is an aggression from the top that they will decide everything and we have nothing to say but to follow. And the idea is that this is the reality so you have to accept it. As if when we had witnessed the fall of socialism in soviet Russia they said socialism has fallen and when the capitalists failing to deliver quality of life, we say that there is recession, all other economic terms. So capitalism never falls. So because we have to accept the reality that this is the reality, so now this is the demand of the capitals so therefore we have to accept it, so let's accept globalisation, let's accept everything blindly. So that is the reality. So this is the one side of the coin and the other side look at the people. I think I am very sure after practicing twenty three years of theatre with the rural people, as I have learnt maximum things from the rural people, I can guarantee you without any hesitation that people are basically intellectual and the intellectual need is the primary need of the people. I heard a story from my friend that some people came from Mars and they landed in Kolkata and they started noticing that when there is the red light the traffics are stopped and when there is green the traffic they are moving. So after watching for a while they understood this is the rule. Red stop and the green allows to go. And then one of them asked the question 'But its true the red stops and the green allows, but who made these rules'. So people's search, it never ends. I can describe from one of my play, it's a very simple play, it is a social drama. You have lot of questions but we can talk about it. But there was a scene where a girl is being measured by the bridegroom before marriage. It's the system in the arranged marriage in Bengal village that the bridegroom from the family they will come and they will examine the girl. So he was examining the girl, measuring her hair, her eyes and all these things and then we were asking spectators why don't you replace that girl. If you were there what would you have done. So spectators were coming one by one and saying please be polite, don't look at me like this, don't touch me, I am not a commodity, all these kind of things. And then I can remember the intervention very well. One day we were performing it in a village where I saw one woman with a child in her lap raised her hand and said I want to intervene. She came and she replaced the protagonist, the oppressed and she said – look, question is not that whether you can touch me or not, whether you can see me politely or not, its not the question. The question to me is why should there be a system where only the bridegrooms, only the male have the right to examine a girl like this. So for her this is not a problem inside a family, this is a problem related to a system, so this is how people act if you bring a problem in front of him. Like Sainath has told in the morning that the globalisation is being fought at the ground level, locally, its being fought locally. You know because there is some local affect of globalisation. So you bring this. People like this woman went from a particular to general, from the reason to risen. And we have experienced. We have made a play on SEZ in Maharashtra in Raigad. We were stopped by the Reliance hooligans in the audience they used to throw stones to the police and the police used to stop our play. It had happened. We have performed play on SEZ and then the people finally decided to go for a hunger strike and they did a hunger strike. Then the administration came and talked to them and some demands were fulfilled. Twenty-two villages were excluded from the SEZ. We have done this. We have done plays on PDAs, we have done plays on you know in Orissa, it was between the janguru and someone is trying to take his brother to a health centre, but the janguru is saying, the witch doctor is saying, no you cannot go.

So there was a debate and finally people understood that it is something related to the health system. You know they started addressing the health system even though the problem was a very local problem. So this journey is always there, so I think to address this new reality we need to create a space where people will have this opportunity to grow intellectually because it was a human need since the beginning of the civilisation when they freed their hand they wanted also to see more things. Because the more information that comes from the experience, conflicts with the information that we have already here in our heads and this result of conflicts transforms information into knowledge. And when the information transforms into the knowledge, for us this is an internal revolution that inspires us to bring a change in the external reality. So therefore the performance never ends, it continues. So we act, we are compelled to act on the stage and we also act outside the stage. So before Sameera is telling me to stop, I feel like saying a lot of things. But before I end, just a minute. You know for me today the big question is how to construct a relation with the spectators. That's very important because TV cannot construct the relation we have experienced. And the construction of relation, whenever you try to construct a relation, you see there are lot of obstacles. You have no time. In the villages we have forgotten how to rehearse for a jatra for about a month. Now we have the CD player we see the films screening. So its difficult. But on the other hand when we talk about relation it is important that how we identify ourselves with the spectators. So its like Mullah Nasruddin once went to see his Murshid and he knocked at the door and the Murshid said 'Who is calling?' Mullah Nasruddin said 'It is Mullah Nasruddin, I calling.' Then the door didn't open. So he was very disappointed. He was travelling around and after sometime he said this agony has cleaned me and then I went again to my Murshid's house and knocked at the door. Murshid said 'Who is calling?' and I said 'It is you calling.' And then the door opened. So the transformation from I to you and we to they is very important because very often we try to see ourselves as performers because we want to be appreciated. But if you want to go beyond the role of the performers, if you want to be the artistes, we have to have the ideas how to construct a relation and that should not come from the head that should also come from the heart. Very often we talk about it, but it is very theoretical, it has got nothing to do with what we think deep inside of our heart. In West Bengal to address this development paradigm there is a forum I tell you they call it Intellectual Forum. So I said why are you calling it intellectual when you are going to support, when you are going to express your solidarity to the farmers and peasants struggle. They said no we have to add this name, we have to say this name intellectual. So this is how we the intellectuals, the academics see the relationship. I am not accusing to anyone. But this is here inside our brain, we must break this, we have to de-construct ourselves to really construct a good relation.

Thank you.