

PROTEST THROUGH STREET PLAYS IN INDIA

Deepak Suryakant Garud

Asst. Professor, (Theatre), Centre for performing Arts,
Savitribai Phule Pune University. Pune. – 411007.

Abstract

Performance and protest through street theatre in India being a theatre artist one should have a strong believe that theatre is a best form of social communication by all means. Every performance is always carry political, social, historical messages with contemporary values / contests. In my views I always take my performance as a challenge for communications and to express my protests against the exploitations, oppression, and imposed injustice in the society. Now a days the community of performers are experiencing the freedom of expression with annoying restrictions. The performers are not getting freedom to make their expressions against the policies in our country. The criticism of anything is being taken as adverse. The expression of the protest is being taken as antinational and antisocial by the followers of particular so-called ideologists. It is a need of an hour to contempt this attitude, the performers has to stand with strong protest through their performances like street theatre. The street theatre is not only creates a conscious against wrong beings i. e. Social evils, political differences, ideological differences but also arouses it to immediate reactions. The performing protest is having a history science colonial period in India. During the colonial period Indian theatre Performers used the theatre forms especially street theatre as a tool of protests. Following the such incidents. H. Dinbandhu Mitra execute the performance of „Nil Darpana“ as a protest against the injustice imposed on farmers in Bengal who refused to sow indigo in their fields.

Keywords: protest, street theatre, colonial period, history, socio-political issues.



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- Define street theatre
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Protest :

- ✚ A statement or an action expressing disapproval, disagreement....
- ✚ A written declaration, typically by a notary public, that the bill has been presented and payment or acceptance refused.

- ✚ Express an objection to what someone has said or done.
- ✚ Declare (something) firmly and emphatically in the face of stated implied doubt or in response to an accusation.

Protest in dictionary.....

- ✚ An expression or declaration of objection, disapproval, or descent, often in opposition, to something a person in power-less to prevent or avoid.
- ✚ The action taken to fix liability for a dishonoured.
- ✚ To give manifest expression to objection or disapproval remonstrates.
- ✚ To make solemn or earnest declaration.

A protest (also called a remonstrance, remonstrator or demonstration) is an expression of bearing witness on behalf of an express cause by words or action with regards to particular events, policies, or situations. Protest can take many different forms, from individual statement to mass demonstrations.

Street theatre.

- Street theatre is a form of theatrical performance and presentation in outdoor public place without specific audience.
- Street theatre going public to be unrepresentative of the public to whom they are trying to communicate and performing to “the man on the street” may be considered a more democratic form of dissemination.
- Street theatre breaks the formal barriers and approaches to the people directly. It is a form of communication. This form is being used to propagate social and political messages and related issues to create awareness amongst the people.

Introduction:

The beginning of modern socio political issues in theatre happened around the time of World War II. The German theatre activists Bertolt Brecht and his partner Erwin Piscator, together developed the “epic theatre,” the concept of alienation, which is theatrical idea that the audience is in no way is supposed to forget that they are seeing a theatrical presentation and to see, what is happening on stage aloofly without involving themselves psychologically in happenings on stage. Thus, forced to think over ongoing issue and re-examine reality. These performances were not meant to be seen as being real but, rather as representations of reality. the work of the audience has just begun after the show is over. They must go back out into the world and make changes, behaving according to what they had seen in the theatre. Brecht’s

belief was that the theatre has the power to change the society. The idea that theatre can be used as a means of instigating political and social change. Brecht's ideas were the foundation for a lot of theatrical protests through the 1960s and 70s. The Vietnam War brought about a widespread motivation for change, and soon the theatre became an important part of the protests. During this time, "revolutionary theatre" (also called "guerrilla theatre" or "street theatre") was very prevalent. The underlying theme was this: Theatre can be used to open people's minds and affect change. This is theatre with a goal to raise awareness and activism and a very different, non-traditional method of achieving that goal. Actors performed on the streets, or in basements or converted garages anywhere that they could be seen by an audience. Performances were spontaneous, not highly organized and often relied heavily on improvisational elements. Antonin Artaud, developed the idea of "Theatre of Cruelty during this period by using the style of theatre is focused on forcing the audience to face unpleasant truths; it is a very in-your-face, unsettling experience that uses all five senses to bombard the audience. This is meant to provoke an instinctive, visceral reaction from the audience, and to compel them to do something, not just to be passive. Famous playwrights David Mamet is known for dramatic works that analyse the political process. Theatre of oppressed by Augusto Boal is came in to force to protest the unjust issues.

During the 1920's, the movement of black theatre grew up more progressive, more radical, and more militant, after II world war to integrate the black playwrights into the mainstream of American theatre to reflect the ideals of black revolution and seeking to establish a mythology and symbolism apart from white culture.

Socio-political issues in India.....

➤ **Social issues.....**

The social issues in India are categorised by the social status, economical conditions, culture, surroundings, the trends, trends, and the mentality of the people. Sometime, these issues are having relevance with dominance of male or female. Some issues are as follows.....

Rape, domestic violence, Child abuse, Child labour, Child marriage, Female foeticides, Dowry, Gender inequality, Illiteracy, Poverty, Unemployment, Corruption, Rapid urbanisation, Religious violence, Caste system, Caste politics and violence, Farmer's suicide, Suicides in youngsters, Environment, Health issues, 'Jat panchayat', Prostitution.

➤ **Political issues.....**

Politics and ideal politicians are sole of Indian democracy, mostly time the issues are raised or been created for the personal and political benefits and general citizens are forced to suffer due to arson and riots over following issues:

Religious extremism, regionalism, corrupt governance, Decline of values in public institutions, issues of LWE (Left Wing Extremist) activities, Social discrimination, social status of rich and poor, political fragmentation of the electoral system, International issues pertaining to India, apathetic/prejudice attitude of media, Unemployment, and restrictions over expressions, Corrupt ideologies in education.

Role of street theatre in protest for socio-political issues in India.

In the British era, the Indian drama artists used theatre for protest as an artistic weapon against the injustice done by the colonial rulers to Indians. On 7th December 1872, the play 'Dinbandhu Mitra' by the Calcutta National Theatrical Society 'Niladarpaan' was presented against the injustice done to the Indian farmers who grew up blue in Bengal. Girish Chandra Ghosh protest against the British by writing dramas Siraj Udoula, Mir Kasim, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on the basis of historical stories. After this inspiration in 1944 and as per the evidence, Bijon Bhattacharya present the first ever street play 'Nibanna' against the injustice imposed to the farmers by the lenders in Bengal. In the early 50s, Ipta introduced 'street Play'' as a tool for social awakening through the liberation movement. Later, in the 60's to 70's, this drama type came to light more effectively. Inspiring by Grootoski's Poor Theatre and Sechner's style of presentation, Sh. Badal Sarkar has successfully made this format as direct interaction tool through participatory audiences in the subject and presentations in the street play style which is known as theatre of commitment. Safdar Hashmi further enhanced the introduction of street play by his Jannatya theatre organisation. Based on the importance of folk art and culture of Indian culture and the impact of folk songs in the life of people and the folk songs sung in daily life Sahiyar (sahi), a group of female artists of Baroda, supported the folk dance of Garba and formed a street play movement for social awakening. At the same time, A Jananatya group of Andhra Pradesh used folk format of 'Aager Ratha' in the street play. As on date, there are more than 10 thousand street play are working in India. The Groups that believe in social activists and left-wing groups are more in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Maharashtra.

The street play of Safdar Hashmi, the third Theatre of the Badal Sarkar, the Rebel Jatra Theatre of Utpal Dutt and the Chhattisgarh People's theatre of Habib Tanvir were the pioneer of this conceptualized theatre. The awareness in artistes was directly related to the problems of the society and was a social commitment. It was an artistic effort to provoke the general mass and lead them towards on their involvement in social issues and to kindle the spirit of protest on all social problems, bad social habits, ethnicity, etc. by forcing them to realise the injustice to them. In early days, an effort of social communication on social issues made by Saints through their teachings, with the same thread the movement of street theatre came in to force for awakening of the general mass as theatre of Protest. On the other hands when we say the street play as a weapon the rulers uses the weapon against weapon. It means the artistic weapon is more effective than any other weapon. Going through the history all the activists were gone through the threatening and extremely murdered by the politics and fascism because of which the fear is there in the activists as well as in the people in India. For this I had some recommendations.

Suggestions and recommendations :

- One can arrange street play competitions were be held (zone wise then final) throughout India with giving them the particular theme.
- Street plays were be performed on university level, college level, government institutions, corporation level, NGO's level to involve new play writes.
- Theatre training for using hummer in the performance.
- Using satirical method for the performance.
- Harsh and direct comments may convert into applied theatre, comedy or to be indirect.

Conclusion :

I am going to conclude with the question, is street theatre now a days is a weapon of protest ? painfully I say no.... when the street theatre is becoming a theatre of propaganda or an advertising element, I just say an element the periphery of the street theatre is changed. It is now in the hands of corrupt and unideal politicians, but with this hope I conclude that we the people of performing arts, who can bring the street theatre as a weapon once again in a new format.

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