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Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)
presents,

'ROLE OF
APPLIED THEATRE
IN INDIAN SOCIETY'

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A Virtual Conference on Applied Theatre Practices in India

E-Book

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Cover Design : Kavita Bankapure

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Technical Consultant : Parag Vartak

Book Layout : Prasad Kulkarni

Publicity Design : Ravi Pawar

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www.appliedtheatreindia.com

Kaustubh Bankapure

education@appliedtheatreindia.com

Applied Theatre is a creative process which can be used in diverse sectors with various stakeholders such as schools, Government & Non-Government Organizations, businesses, social and community development initiatives. Through this process, facilitators involve their participants in various dramatic situations to provide an experience of what needs to be taught. The first ever virtual conference on 'Role of Applied Theatre in Indian Society' organized by Applied Theatre India Foundation in association with Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is an opportunity for Applied Theatre practitioners in India to present their work and research on an international platform. The practices need to be theorized for the appropriate study in future and ATI Foundation is working to build the academic framework in India for Applied Theatre. It is high time that Applied Theatre be introduced as a mainstream area of study supported by solid research by the practitioners, and the virtual conference is the first step towards formalizing Applied Theatre study in India.

People working in diverse fields, such as theatre in education, theatre of the oppressed, playback theatre, special education need, and storytelling participated in this conference from India, USA and the UK. This E-Book contains all the papers presented in the conference and we are glad to announce that this will be the first ever conference book on Applied Theatre practices in India. All the presentations are available on ATI Foundation's YouTube channel and the respective links are given at the end of each article.

We are thankful to ICCR and their team for supporting this conference and making it possible. We are also thankful to all the presenters for their time, dedication and the trust they have shown. This conference wouldn't have been possible without the support of following people and we take this opportunity to thank them from the bottom of our heart.

Parag Wartak (Technical Consultant), Ravi Pawar (Publicity Design), Kavita Bankapure (Cover Design), Prasad Kulkarni (E-Book Layout), Vaishali Goswami and Shridhar Kulkarni (Conference Co-ordinator)

We finally thank the audience and our well-wishers for attending the conference.

Applied Theatre India Foundation is committed towards providing quality education in Applied Theatre and making it a mainstream field of study in Indian education.

Kaustubh Bankapure

Conference Director

Role of Applied Theatre in Indian Society - 2020

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Keynote Address
The Magic of Drama in Education

Dr. Swaroop Sampat Rawal

PhD. in Education,
The University of Worcester

In this talk I investigate drama in education; I explore the theory behind my practice, and my practice itself. My talk is 'multi-layered', in the sense that the method of drama education, my practice, data, do not 'stand alone' they permeate through this talk. All this is blended in my practice and cannot be separated from each other (Rawal, 2013).

All through, my talk is divided into two segments. The first half begins with an overview of the methods used and theoretical discussions; the second giving examples from my classroom, outlining the practical aspects of the implementation of my drama curriculum; it describes 'what I did', 'how I did' and 'why I did so'.

Drama-in education :

Drama-in-education (DIE) is termed as theatre-in-education (TIE) by some practitioners. However there is a distinction between both the terms even though both are concerned with drama, pedagogy and have the conviction that drama has the power to transform human behaviour. DIE where a teacher plays a role and TIE in which a team of actors perform, both engage in a change of understanding through drama. I think that is where the similarity ends.

What then is drama?

The Greek used the word 'drama' with a meaning, 'to live through' and this is the context we use when we consider drama for learning and development of children and adolescents. Drama should provide a learning situation. A teacher/ facilitator working with young adults should be mainly concerned with the development of personality. The finished product in drama is not important, what should be of importance are the energy and growth of the participants. Drama is both an art form in its own right

and also a valuable teaching and learning methodology, which has been shown to work successfully in formal and non-formal educational settings.

What is education?

Education, which is the process of helping people to find necessary meanings in life, involves both teaching and learning. The mind is not a blank slate. It only needs awakening. Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas (Vivekananda, nd.).

The three main characteristics of Drama in Education are:

1. learning through doing /activity;

2. problem clarification in groups;

3. discovering hidden meanings through self-experience

In this talk I have mentioned some of the basic elements of DiE like games and tableaux.

Drama games :

I use games in the drama class as prescribed drama activities. Prescribed drama activities enable development of 'language of drama' (Peter, 1995, p. 67) and assist specific skills acquisitions. I use the term prescribed drama activities to distinguish games used by me from the kind of drama games used at a relatively superficial level like the ones used for warm-up and cool-down.

Although drama practitioners frown upon games (Fleming, 1999), I usually start off with games as they have their advantage when working with novices as :

- They have pre-determined structures with very definite objectives (Fleming, 1999), they allow the task and the goal to be seen clearly.

- They help with specific skill acquisition, in drama and in life skills (Spolin, 1991).

- They allow a problem to be scrutinized, as it is possible to side-step during the playing of it (Heathcote, 1984).

- They provide a structured method of initiating drama (Fleming, 1999). Games would help my students, who had little or no experience in drama, to get their footing in drama. I therefore used games as a teaching tool to introduce the children to drama.

- They allow the teacher to assess the response and social cohesion of the group (Fleming, 1999).

Tableaux :

One of the slightly advanced techniques of drama I use is 'tableaux', 'freeze frames' or 'statues'. I usually use the word statue because it is a simpler word. Additionally, the children in India play a game called 'Statue' therefore my students can correlate the concept of creating statues with that of freeze frames.

A tableau is a term used when participants are asked to create still images with their bodies, to capture a moment in time, to depict an idea or to isolate a moment in drama. Tableaux are a good form of drama to use with beginners (Fleming, 1999) as they :

- Freeze a moment in time.

- Teach how to condense meaning into a single moment and to read the full significance of a single moment.

- Encourage children to focus on the way meaning is conveyed by subtle changes in expression, gestures and position.

- Protect the participants by distancing themselves from moments that are emotionally difficult, for example instead of enacting a funeral the group could depict the moments in the form of tableaux. Thus tableaux support presentations, which could be made in an unthreatening context.

- Are 'silent', no dialogues are necessary.

Learning has not so much to do with the activity as it has to do with the quality of the experience for the group and the significance of the activity to the ultimate aim of the teacher (Heathcote, 1984). Reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) after the children engaged in playing helped the children and me move beyond the superficial level. It facilitated a dialectic process which implies that discussion and logical argument are means to investigate understanding.

Deepening the participants' work and moving away from stereotyping is dealt with during reflection time. Reflection time is not necessarily held only at the end of the class. Reflection can be carried out at anytime of the meeting and at any stage of the play.

Pretext :

A photograph, a gesture, a title or a classic text may be used as an effective pre-text (Taylor, 2000). The launching strategy or pre-text in process drama is fundamental to its development suggests O'Neill (in Taylor, 1995 a). *'Playwrights use dramatic form when crafting opening scenes… which usually contain the seed of the forthcoming action'* (Taylor, 2000: p. 25).

Mantle of the Expert :

Mantle of the Expert is an educational approach that uses fictional contexts (co-created by the teacher and students (Heathcote & Bolton, 1996) to generate purposeful activities for learning. Meaningful, cross-curricular contexts for learning are created through this process as they study history, geography, art, design and technology as well as developing skills in reading, writing, problem-solving, and inquiry.

Mantle is not a cloak by which is person is recognized. This is no garment to cover. I use it as a quality: of leadership, carrying standards of behavior, morality, responsibility, ethics and the spiritual basis of all action. The mantle embodies the standards I ascribe to. It grows by usage, not garment stitching.

Expert is essential in the name because I value learning and curiosity to enquire. Schooling imposes such burdens of "out there" information upon students that ways must be found to inspire and reward curious enquiry and give children the first steps towards pleasure in exploring new fields, and shedding the insidious fear of making mistakes' (Heathcote, 2009).

I will leave you with Dorothy Heathcote's words which I find applicable to my classroom work hoping you will listen to my talk.

'I don't have a name for what I do. Between all that has happened before I arrived and what it is now. What I do at this moment obviously shapes up some part of what is to come. Everything that has happened before me I have something in common with, and this is my secret for finding material for drama'.Heathcote

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Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/l856zA_O-6k

Theatre of the Oppressed as a Liberatory Pedagogy

Ravi Ramaswamy

ravi.r@ccdc.in

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a creative tool for personal and social transformation created by Augusto Boal, the Brazilian Theatre Director in the 1960s. Boal was inspired by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist and his ideas of liberatory pedagogy which was elucidated in his seminal work Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

The life and work of both Freire and Boal were shaped by their first-hand experience of the political oppression in Brazil of that time, which affected all aspects of life- social, economic and cultural. While Freire, in his writings and in the Culture Circles that he led, highlighted the need for people to be able to read and make meaning of the world by themselves, Boal, created spaces where people learned to embody their emotions and desires to bring about change in their lives. The games and exercises in Theatre of the Oppressed are now used worldwide to address a wide variety of systemic oppressions, including internalized oppression.

The Centre for Community Dialogue and Change (CCDC), founded in March 2011, has been using Theatre of the Oppressed to work mainly in the area of education. CCDC conducts annual trainings and workshops in Theatre of the Oppressed for communities across India. CCDC has also been invited to conduct Forum Theatre projects and workshops outside India. Our experience of nearly 10 years, and particularly the feedback* from our participants, have convinced us that the unique transformative power of this theatre methodology lies in the simple yet profound principles of human relationships that underlie this pedagogy. This paper will focus on the three central concepts of Oppression, Dehumanization and Dialogue that help us understand these principles.

The first half of this paper will offer a brief introduction to these concepts, while the second half will show how the entire body of games and exercises in TO illustrate how these concepts work in practice.

How do we understand oppression?

Oppression exists in any relationship where one person exerts their authority or power over another person or group of people in order to suppress, to silence or discriminate against them. Augusto Boal explains 'Oppression' as "*a relationship in which there is only monologue. Not Dialogue*". (1)

Oppression can be found in social structures like family, marriage, in political structures, health care systems, anywhere where there is hierarchy between human beings or communities. For e.g. in a family, parents think and decide for a young person often disregarding what he or shedesires. These structures being age-old, traditionally and culturally approved, legitimise the oppressive behaviour stemming out of an authoritative relationship. The oppressed, facing this oppression over several years, gradually tend to accept their oppression as their only way of being, and this thinking dehumanizes them. The oppressor, doing everything in their power to devalue, derecognize and therefore dehumanize the oppressed, over time become dehumanized themselves.

Dehumanization also occurs due to internalized oppression. For e.g. A student in Grade 9 or 10 shuts out all 'distractions' and immerse themselves in a bookish preparation for their medical entrance examinations. For several years, their development as caring and sensitive human beings is neglected. When they enter medical college they get sucked into the everyday grind of OPD visits and ward rounds which become a daily chore rather than a meaningful learning process. They become mechanized in their interactions, as they try desperately to cope with the severe psychological and other stresses of medical training. Suchmechanization prevents us from being fully human and less able to build meaningful relationships.

The goal of Theatre of the Oppressed is to rehumanize individuals and relationships. The games and exercises in a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop enable participants to become acutely aware of their own emotions and find ways to creatively express these emotions. This is made possible through the innovative and imaginative use of the body as the repository of deep knowledge and wisdom that each one of us possesses. This creative expression of their emotions lead to gaining insights into themselves and the people around them and start a process of reflection.

These insights create a desire for change.

We now come to the next fundamental concept in Theatre of the Oppressed- Dialogue. Dialogue is not just two people talking to each other. A truly dialogical relationship can only occur when there is equality between the two people attempting to dialogue. Where there is equality, there is respect, listening, engagement with and movement towards the other. Dialogue is possible even within traditionally hegemonic structures where the participants are committed to changing the structure and creating a meaningful relationship. Speaking of education, Freire says,

"Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators."(2)

What is critical here is the idea of teachers and students being co-creators of knowledge. The teacher does not presume to have all the knowledge and consider the students as '*empty vessels*' for depositing knowledge - what Freire calls the 'Banking model' of education. The banking model of education continues to strengthen the authority of the teacher and dims the creative potential of the students, thus also reducing the chances of them developing a critical consciousness. Developing a critical consciousness is necessary for the students to be able to engage wholly and meaningfully with the world in which they live.

A liberatory pedagogy is built on the belief that a) teachers and students are co learners in the education process i.e. teachers and students assist each other learn, and b) education is about opening one's minds to the possibilities of transformation of the world. Bell Hooks elucidates this in Teaching *Community, A Pedagogy of Hope* where she says, '*Education as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously. It teaches them to reflect and act in ways that further self –actualization, rather than conformity to the status quo'.* (3)

The teacher/ learner who believes in the principles of liberatory pedagogy tries to make learning a part of and not distant from the reality of the students.

A crucial element in this form of learning is joy. Joy enables students and teachers to be alive and creative. Being alive, students are able to think critically about the happenings in the world and pave the way for transformation. Experiencing the joy of learning, experiencing the power that comes with feeling alive, is so vital to being human that we agree with Freire when he says '*If a structure does not permit dialogue the structure must be changed'.*

All these ideas- engaging in true dialogue, critical thinking and acting to create change- are brilliantly captured in the details of the games and exercises in Theatre of the Oppressed.

A T O workshop starts with a set of agreements which are as follows : Honour confidentiality, Speak for yourself/your experience, listen to understand, agree to disagree, Take care of yourself (Right to pass) and step up/step back. Use the language you are most comfortable in- an agreement we at CCDC added as essential in a country like India where the politics of language can affect communication and expression so deeply. These are not rules set down by the facilitator, but are

instead agreements made in consultation with all those present in the workshop space. These agreements set the tone for democratic and participative learning throughout the workshop, and if necessary, participants may be reminded of these through the workshop. The importance of these agreements cannot be overestimated. After a workshop in a school, when asked what their most important take away from the workshop, one of the children said "that none of the activities was compulsory". In a world governed by rules and with no room for free thinking, a simple agreement such as the Right to Pass, can feel life changing.

The games in Theatre of the Oppressed continue the process of dialogue and democratic participative learning. For e.g. In Sound and Movement Transformation, the participants each choose a sound and a movement that they enjoy and start moving into the circle making their sound and movement. Once they have experienced how it feels in their body, they pass their sound and movement to another person in the circle. They stand in front of them, making their sound and movement until the other person has received it, that is, makes the same sound and movement. This person now steps into the circle making the sound and movement they received, though it is not their own, and continue to do it until they feel like changing it and then create a sound and movement of their own. This continues until everyone in the circle has experienced receiving a sound and movement, and creating their own. The facilitator encourages the participants to listen to their bodies and engage with the sound and movement given to them before changing it. As with all games in Boal, this game too is a metaphor, beautifully bringing out all the elements of dialogue: listening, engagement and movement.

In Carnival in Rio, one of my favourite games from Boal, the ideas of 'individuality' and 'group' are played out. Through sound and movement, this game gets participants thinking about changing their sound and movement, how and why one makes a change, and at what cost. What is the meaning of unity? Can there be multiple perceptions of unity? Is it possible to respect and accept differences and still be a group? As a facilitator it is imperative that the instructions given at every stage are very clear- like, at the beginning of the game, when we ask participants to 'choose a sound and an action that you really like' so that you can continue to do it for a long time in the game. When you choose a sound and action you like, you are invested in it and so have something to lose when you give it up. Similarly, the debrief after the game can help participants see how everyone's experiences were different, and yet contributed to the overall collective outcome.

The games prepare participants for what comes next in a TO workshop- Image Theatre. We are so comfortable voicing our views and feelings through words that it is difficult to get used to expressing ourselves through our bodies. But the body is a storehouse of experiences, memories, feelings and emotions associated with them. Accessing this underground source of knowledge that we hold in our bodies can be deeply transformative. Once participants are comfortable working with their bodies, and their senses are awakened, it is time to give them the tools to listen to their bodies. The images that we make with our bodies tell stories that often words cannot. Images can hold multiple meanings

simultaneously and therein lies their value. In Image Theatre we can experience the freedom of expressing ourselves without the fear of judgement or fixed interpretations and labels that are a staple of our worldly experience. When participants gradually ease into making images spontaneously, they often discover hidden truths about themselves.

New insights, new and sometimes uncomfortable feelings, and many stories waiting to be told. This is the point in a TO workshop that calls for Forum Theatre, one of the most popular and widely used structures from TO. Using Image Theatre, the participants create scenes of conflict from shared real experiences from their lives. The objective is to show a conflict such that the oppression is clearly identifiable. The audience then gets an opportunity to be a part of the play by being *spect-actors-* taking the place of the protagonist (the oppressed) in the play, and trying out their ideas to come out of the oppression. *Being a spect-actor* in a Forum Theatre performance is an opportunity to experience real dialogue. Forum Theatre is a space where the actors engage in a dialogue with the audience and together work on moving forward in collective understanding of the conflict. It is important to note that the goal of Forum Theatre is not to demonize the oppressor, but to rehumanize the relationship. The rehumanization of this relationship needs to start with the oppressed. As Freiresays' *This, then is the great humanistic and a historical task of the oppressed; to liberate themselves and their oppressors.'* (4) It is only the oppressed who have the power and the desire to bring back agency into their lives.

Throughout a workshop and during a Forum Theatre performance, the facilitator or Joker plays a crucial role. The joker sets the space for participants to be themselves and voice their opinions, even if controversial, without being attacked or judged for expressing them. The joker at all times is neutral i.e. does not take sides nor does he bring his own opinions into the space. However, the joker is also called a *difficultator.* They have a responsibility to not allow quick and easy assumptions and must, if necessary, problematize statements made by the audience in order to bring out the complexity of the issue.

Though the joker is neutral while facilitating discussions, the joker needs to have a view on issues around them. This stand becomes evident in Forum Theatre, for example, in the perspective from which the story of a conflict is told. Freire puts it succinctly when he says *'The educator has the duty of not being neutral'.*

Reminding us of our sacred duty to understand the world we live in, Freire says, *'[T]he more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, and to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue with them '.* (5)

Engaging in a dialogue is difficult and does not always end in people feeling happy and peaceful. Transformation through dialogue can also be a long drawn out process. When the goal is to fight against oppression, people tend to become physically and mentally weary and even lose hope because they see the oppressor and oppression as larger than life. It helps to remember that the intention behind dialogue is always to transform structures and relationships and not to fight against the oppressor/oppression. Only the desire to create something new and worthwhile can sustain us in the struggle for change.

Let me conclude with these words of Boal *"When does a session of Theatre of the Oppressed end? Never- since the objective is not to close a cycle, to generate a catharsis, or to end a development. On the contrary, its objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists. And it is precisely for these reasons that the Theatre of the Oppressed should be the initiator of changes culminating of which is not the aesthetic phenomenon but real life."* (6)

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*Notes :

I) *After the completion of a yearlong workshop for students at a private school in Bangalore, the Vice Principal remarked that 'Earlier, there was a problem of violence between boys and girls. The girls when they got hit would hit, would not respond at all. Now, after the workshop, when the girls get hit, they take action by complaining to their teachers.'*

ii) *A student from a private school in Bangalore said that' in your workshop I was very shy and couldn't participate wholly. But now, (it's been 4 years since the workshop) I run my own YouTube channel and act ad direct short scenes. The workshop made me more confident.'*

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/a76mpMkKQ5g

Applications of Storytelling in Virtual Pre-primary and Primary Classrooms

Manasee Mahajan

manaseepm@gmail.com

The hypothesis :

Online or virtual classrooms are at best a stop gap solution to discontinuity in learning for majority students. The effectiveness of online learning, especially for pre-primary and primary school children has not been evaluated widely (AZU, 2020).

Teaching tools like usage of power point presentations, videos, whiteboards etcetera are perceived to be enablers of an interactive and material rich virtual classroom. Educational strategies of reduction in syllabus, increased testing and homework are used to help retain online learning. There has been a woeful lack of understanding about how these tools and strategies help effectiveness of learning in virtual classes for young children. The scope of this essay is limited to finding out how virtual classes for pre-primary and primary children can be made more effective. Discussion on suitability of virtual classes for this age group is not in the scope of the undertaken topic.

I would like to hypothesize that unless teachers use storytelling as the main teaching methodology in virtual classrooms, it will be impossible to engage learners of the said age group, thereby rendering the teaching ineffective and unretentive.

The physical classroom :

Imagine a typical day in the school.

A bunch a bright and giggling pre-primary children make their way to the school. They are greeted by the watchman who checks their ID card, reads, and greets them by their name. The teacher-helper escorts them to their class giving instructions not to run, to walk in a line, maybe in a vernacular language, which the children follow. The children are babbling endlessly, in various languages, including secret coded ones they have made up. In the classroom, they drop their bags in the

designated area labelled 'BAGS and BOTTLES', take their materials from compartments labelled by their names, and sit under their house names prominently displayed in the class. The classroom is rich with charts, pictures, books that the children see, touch, and create. The teacher greets them with their favorite rhyme which everybody repeats enthusiastically. The teacher is soon surrounded by children wanting to tell her about the new shell they found, or how they scraped their knee, or how angry mother was at father yesterday. The teacher patiently listens, encourages, offers a dose of appreciation, advice or consolation as needed. "I went on a jumpoline yesterday" a little one squeaks, while demonstrating what a 'jumpoline' is. The teacher remarks how exciting the jumpoline must have been and shows the class a picture of a trampoline asking whether this is what the child played on yesterday.

During a leisurely stroll in the school garden, a child sees a flower that is familiar. He recalls seeing it in his garden and informs the teacher so. The teacher points out how nicely the "sadafuli", meaning that which flowers through the year, has bloomed, and that it is called Periwinkle in English. The child smells, touches and feels the flower. "So pretty!" he gushes. Back in the class the child makes a drawing of the flower which finds it place on the classroom wall, with 'sadafuli' and 'periwinkle' written in a bold hand under it.

The teacher includes these experiences in the language class while teaching them the letter p, its sound /p/ and words starting with that sound, pretty Periwinkle.

Experiences gained in the physical classroom :

1. Seeing one's name written in print at least 3-4 times in the day. Understanding that these written symbols tell people what my name is.

2. Hearing instructions, in vernacular language and English, interpreting and following them.

3. Seeing and understanding the meaning of signs / words written in the classrooms.

4. Seeing pictures and associated words on the class walls.

5. Viewing sight words written on furniture and material throughout the classroom.

6. Narrating incidences, engagement in active listening and giving thoughtful reactions to narrated incidents.

7. Expansion of vocabulary, association of words in mother tongue with other languages.

8. Engagement with the teacher and staff, exposure to conversations in multiple languages.

9. Understanding structures of the language through constant exposure to the spoken form.

10. Association of spoken form with written symbols.

11. A firm association of sound, symbol and experience is created in the child's brain.

The child, through the physical environment that he is a part of and the experiences that he is deriving from it, explores the language and is encouraged to try it out. He seeks validation of his experiments through reactions from peers and teachers. He is exposed to the written word in a natural manner. Formal language learning in the classroom is supplemented by the language rich environment and physical experiences. Opportunities for exploration of the language are abundant, just the way we all learn our mother tongue, through interactions and conversations around us. This makes the process of formal language and grammar learning have 'sense' in the child's point of view.

The virtual classroom :

Now picture the virtual classroom.

Twenty-five children watching their teacher on the screen. Each child has a different setting at home, which might or might not be conducive for learning. It can be many times chaotic and distractive as well. The teacher is trying to teach language concepts like adjectives or nouns by referring to the textbook. The children are more interested in exploring the online platform or the spider on the wall behind the teacher, than what the teacher is trying to convey. Some children are obsessed with the time, constantly reminding the teacher that there are only so many more minutes left before the meeting ends. The incessant chatting and talking makes the teacher mute everybody so that he can at least brush upon the topic of the day! The material that the children can view is confined to the 16 sq inch box on the screen where they can view the teacher holding it up, or passively watch it being played out as a video for them. They need to be sitting still, looking at the screen, straining to hear the teacher over the whims of their internet connections, trying to see the materials shown by the teacher, all the while finding it hard not to be distracted by the activities happening around in their home surrounding. Unable to connect with the class, the child soon zones out.

Experiences lost in the virtual classroom :

The virtual classroom has stripped away the language rich environment and experiences that a physical classroom provides. There is

1. Very limited opportunity to interact with anyone else but the teacher.

2. Zero peer interaction because of the 'noise levels' that can create over online classes.

3. No language rich materials easily visible and available for a sustained period around the child.

4. Exposure to only the language used at home, extremely limited exposure to any other language.

5. Non mother-tongue languages accessible only in a formal manner, not informally through casual conversations with peers and adults.

6. Not enough time to seek meanings of new words and language structures.

7. No visual signs, boards, sight words or sufficiently rich written material in the environment.

8. Lack of a library and books other than 'study' related books provided by the school.

9. No meaningful conversation with friends or teacher, thus no chance of serendipity for new words.

10. No physical experience to associate with language learning.

No one can dispute that the environment of the physical and the virtual classrooms is totally different. And yet, we follow the same language teaching pedagogy for children in the virtual classroom. Furthermore, we expect them to learn at the same rate they would if they had been in a physical classroom.

Bridging the gap :

The gaps in the virtual learning experience due to absence of a language rich environment need to be bridged by adopting a pedagogy that focuses not on the material to be learned, but on eliciting deep engagement with the learners.

Lack of physical interaction with learning material needs to be compensated by ensuring that the lessons draw on the child's experiences and fire her imagination. For children to learn effectively, they will need to be engaged in the class, and for them to be engaged, the teacher needs to connect with them at a level that arouses their creativity and imagination.

The case for storytelling :

Beginner learners develop listening skills before starting to produce the language. Hence the nature of the child's interaction, quantitatively and qualitatively during the initial learning stage is of utmost importance. This helps them lay the foundation for their future learning (Ray & Seely, 2004). This is

precisely why teachers need to give qualitative input, meaning that the child be exposed to abundance of listening, reading and other material to make him familiar with the language. These inputs should be engaging, natural, derived from the child's experiences, and meaningful. (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Two main sources from which language learners receive input are listening and reading. As a result, storytelling and story reading becomes a powerful strategy in the early stages of language development, because it provides learners with qualitatively enriching and engaging input.

Mello (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of eight studies regarding the use of storytelling as a teaching methodology.

Mello demonstrated that storytelling boosted literacy of the learners with respect to fluency, vocabulary expansion, writing and memory. It was also inferred that storytelling served to improve self-awareness, visual imagery, and cultural knowledge.

Martinez (2007) concluded that a story based pedagogical approach with meaningful topics provided students with a connection between personal experiences and the language lessons.

Duff and Maley (1990), argue that the use of literature in the classroom offers advantages of a range of styles, engages personal experience, and brings about genuine interaction in the classroom.

Thus, it can be summarized from the literature that adopting a pedagogical approach which incorporates storytelling at its core for young learners will

1) involve both listener and teller in a highly interactive and creative process.

2) assist children in theory building and language fluency.

3) assist cognitive development through social, emotional, and intellectual functions

4) enhance writing and oral ability

5) contribute to language learning when implemented in a sustained manner.

The Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) (Alley and Overfield, 2008) method is a popular method for teaching languages that largely abandons textbook lessons and grammar exercises and focuses instead on telling stories through illustrative gestures, expressions, and physical exercises for language instruction.

Applications in the classroom :

Storytelling is often seen by teachers as a skill that is possessed by a select few. Not all teachers feel comfortable narrating a story in front of a classroom. They are bogged down by trying to memorize the text of the story or feel overwhelmed while displaying emotions indispensable in the narrative. They fear losing the attention of the class during the narrative. For the apprehensive teacher, it would be a relief to know that storytelling in the classroom does not always need to be a performance. It does not have to be a story as perceived in the traditional manner. Here are a few suggestions for teachers to incorporate storytelling in the classroom.

1. **Personal experience stories :**

    Personal experience stories, e.g., something humorous that happened the other day, from the teacher's childhood, about her family spark immediate engagement with children. Stories like these show the teacher in more 'human' light and endear her to the children. These stories are immensely helpful for creating a teacher-child bond.

2. **Introducing concepts through incidences / stories :**

    Concepts in various academic subjects can be introduced through short stories. I would like to cite the example of the story, How Big is a Foot by Rolf Myller as an example. With the Queen's birthday only days away, the King is concerned that the royal carpenters will not be able to build her a bed because they do not know how to measure. The story takes the reader through a journey of why we need standard measures and how we can measure various objects.

3. **Picture reading :**

    Nothing sparks imagination like picture reading. A class activity where children observe a given picture and create a story around is it an excellent way to improve observation skills, language skills, interactive and team skills and critical thinking. Pictures taken as examples can be related to the concept that the teacher has planned for the class.

4. **Book read-aloud :**

    Book read-aloud, if done with a certain level of dramatic skill can greatly be useful for language development and vocabulary expansion. Such readings should be followed by an activity based on the book, so that the children can immediately put into action any thoughts that they might have had while listening to the story. Props and objects can add to the effect of the story.

5. **Problem based stories :**

    Problem based stories can be a way of resolving classroom conflicts, teaching values, history as well as science. These stories can be woven around the issue to be tackled. The issue at hand

can be structured as a narrative or a story and be followed by a discussion about it. E.g., a character with a particular problem can be described and ways of resolving that problem can be brainstormed.

6. **Narrative stories :**

 These are traditional story narratives, based on books, movies, or any material that the teacher has read and wants to communicate to the class.

7. **Cultural stories :**

Education cannot be apart from the culture of the child, and hence stories based in local mythology spark immediate interest. These stories can be used for language development, as well as value education.

8. **Humor :**

This can be quite unexpected for most teachers, but even jokes can be considered as a manner of storytelling. Short humorous incidences, real or imagined, jokes that we read can all be a part of the storytelling in the classroom. Humor has the power of making people relax and attentive, both qualities highly essential for an effective classroom.

9. **Personal experience stories by children :**

Children can be encouraged to tell stories to the peers, in front of the class or in groups. These experiences increase speaking, listening as well as public speaking skills. These can be centered around a concept, e.g., stories about flowers. Personal experiences can be converted to stories, in which each child tells one sentence related to the topic. E.g., personal story of virtual field trip to a farm.

10. **Teacher created stories :**

Stories that the teacher creates to reinforce certain academic concepts. E.g. for pre-primary children, phonic sounds can be completely taught using stories. These act as memory enhancers, helping learners remember the sound-symbol relations easily. Stories can also be created around concepts of math, languages, and science. These need not be complicated or dramatic, they can be as simple and short as the teacher wants.

Inferences :

It is important to note that the applications of storytelling mentioned above are as feasible on an online platform as they are in the physical classroom. Stories provide children with the necessary quality language input, which is the basic building block for a beginner learner. Rather than approaching pre-primary and primary learning through traditional pedagogical approaches, it is

essential that teachers adapt their methodologies to use more and more stories, irrespective of the subject being taught. Virtual platforms have reduced engagement with material rich classrooms and have created barriers in teacher-learner communication. Stories are a way in which both these issues can be resolved in the virtual space, classes made more enjoyable and young learners can be kept interested in the learning process.
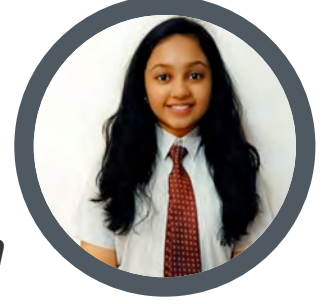
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Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/Vv9Jy1OH1zA

The Significance of Theatre (Natya) in School Education

Dr. Nilesh Parekh

nilesh.dance@gmail.com

Ms. Priyal Shah

Abstract :

In this articlein the beginning the researchers have tried to give general information about theatre (Naṭya) taking the help of Naṭyaśastra like its definition, form, etc. Later on they present their thoughts on the application of theatre during school education. They mention that how theatre facilitates the children in their various phases of life. They have also given two examples of one street play and second small skit which has been presented by children. In conclusion, sharing their own experiences, they reveal that expressing anything through the form of theatre enhances the way of learning and makes it easy and simple for the children to understand and apply their learning in their life which helps a child to transform his or her potentiality into a reality.

Introduction :

If one would want to be imaginative and inventive about articulating their thoughts, theatre would possibly be the finest way to do soas one can see that in Natyashastra Sage Bharata tells that *'there is no knowledge, no craft, no science, no art, no Yoga or action that does not fall within the purview of theatre'* – न तज्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं न सा विद्या न सा कला। नासौ योगे न तत्कर्म नात्येस्मिन् यन्न द्रष्यते।।११७[1]।। An artistic inclination is somewhat which every child is born with. To come out as someone who has the bent of mind that could realize splendor and creativity, and to be a true artist, it is very significant that the correct support and encouragement be offered at the right age. People say that a great artist cannot be made; he is born like that. Though, the researchers disagree on this belief. Before the society can distinguish the creative fineness of an artist, he or she has to obtain an enormous support and encouragement, not just at school but at home, from family and from friends. When young minds are tapped at that tender age, artistic abilities and creative intuitions are imbibed, which expands the mind in ways one could not really visualize otherwise and the child is able to appreciate and value nature better.

Thratre (Natya) :

The term *'Natya'* has been derived from the term '*Naṭa*', that means acting or moving. It is basically a representation of certain theme encompassing speech, music as well as dancing. The rules of Bharata, Dhananjaya, etc. formed the basis of evolution for the ancient Indian theatre. An artist would take years and years of training and hard work to meet perfection in the beautiful language of gestures and movements. He would not only follow the instructions given by the author in the books but would also add value to the process by using his own imagination.

The Definition of Natya :

Sage Bharata defines*Nāṭya* as:

[1] Shashtri, Babulal S. (2005). ''श्री भरतमुनिप्रणीतं सचित्रम् – नाट्यशास्त्रं – 'प्रदीप' हिन्दीव्याख्या – टिप्पणी – परिशिष्ट – प्रस्तावनादिभिर्विभूषितम्'' Part I. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan. Page: 28

[2] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/The-importance-of-art-for-students/articleshow/43101159.cms

[3] Sarabhai, Mrinalini (1992). *"Understanding BharataNāṭyam".* Ahmedabad : A Darpana Publication. Page: 29

Sage Bharata defines *Natya* as : योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः। सोऽङ्गाद्यभिनयोपेतो नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते॥ १२१ ॥ – अध्याय १ means, When a temperamentof an individual illustrateded through the actions, words, and attire then it is known as *Natya.*[4]

The Form of Natya :

Technically speaking *Nā‾ṭya* is also known as *'Ru‾pa'*as because then only it gets visibility. According to A‾ca‾rya Abhinavagupta the word, *Nā‾ṭya* has arrived from the verbal root *'Naṭa'*, where the character leaves his or her own nature and adopts the nature of another character so at that time it becomes *Nā‾ṭya* or *Ru‾pa*.

The Activity of Natya :

नानाभावोपसम्पन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम्। लोकवृत्तानुकरणं नाट्यमेतन्मया कृतम्॥ ११२ ॥ – अध्याय १ means, *Natya* is an

impersonation of dealings and manners of public, which is prosperous in a variety of feelings, and which describes diverse circumstances.[5]

Ancient India saw abundant art forms that were performed. Among these many art forms, *Nā̄tya* was quite popular and it formed part of a student's education.

Theatre In School Education :

In today's times when man is too busy to become aware of anything that occur around him, theatre plays a progressively more vital role in determining the young minds and leading them towards positivity while also inculcating principles of admiration and accepting towards natural beauty. When a student has an artistic and creative openness, he or she approaches every chore aesthetically and with a constructive approach. When exposed to theatre, not only the child's creative skill is improved, but also as he matures, he expands into a receptive and balanced human being with a mind that is plentiful with talent and creativity. It is indeed essential for theatre to be an essential part of the school syllabus for children.

Application of Theatre In School Education :

Talking about their own school, the researchers mentions that the theatre is interwoven in their school education during the language teaching subjects and during various inter-house activities which comprises of different forms of theatre like street-play, small skit, roll-play, mime, etc.

The language teachers convert their regular text lessons into a form of drama. They adaptit intothe dialogue forms and gives specific characters to the children. The children then learn to deliver the dialogues according to the characters they are portraying. This really helps each and every child to understand the concept and visualize that particular lesson.

Many a times the teachers train their students to work on scripts that deal with social issues for inter-house competitions. This enlightens the students about what prevails in society and covers the aspect of social education as well as theatre education. Also giving opportunity to each and every student the teachers sees that those who are keenly interested in drawing and modeling work are trained to create the props. The children those who have good dressing sense are trained to design the costumes. Students with a keen interest in music are trained in singing and composing music for the play.

One of the examples of inter-house street-play competition is as follow :

In the year 2019 the students participated in the street play competition under 4 major topics for each

of the 4 Houses - '**तमाशा**' highlighting media hype, '**मनमर्जिया**' showcasing value of Money, '**नाम गुम जायेगा**' dealing with India's Heritage and '**जो दिखता है वहि बिकता है**' depicting people's innate nature to get allured to outer beauty.

ILLUSTRATION 1 :

The Significance Of Theatre In School Education :

The significance of theatre is seen in all the aspects of life. Theatre in education helps to inspire effective learning in schools. It enhances the thought process of children and broadens their perspective of thinking. It helps them build up innovative ideas. Theatreeven boosts the children's self-esteem as it teaches them how to speak confidently in front of large audience. It inculcates effective communication skills in children which involveoratory and listening skills. Moreover, it includes how to put forth the ideas and message clearly and how to use the language in a particular role. For the communication to be effective, voice modulation and variation in speaking is necessary. For example, in drama, the protagonist voices his dialogue in a different manner than the villain. Their body language and their appearance too differ. Moreover, their attire and their overall portrayal vary. So the performers also have to deal with these types of variations which ultimately lead them to perform efficiently on stage.

It inculcates creative problem solving ability in the children while performing i.e. it includes how to recover any flaw while enacting. In addition to this, children develop their presence of mind along with stage presence. Moreover, theatre in education helps children to develop the ability to work independently and cooperatively. Thus, a subtle sensitive way of conveying a very great social message is one of the great parts of theatrical experience.

Here are few of the benefits the researchers would like to bring into notice which are achieved by students through theatre education in school :

Increase In Self-Confidence :

Involvement and interest in theatre arts enhances children's belief in themselves, it boosts their confidence and helps them understand that they need not all be the same, that they are special in their own unique way. For instance, being able to perform on the stage in front of an audience may not be everyone's cup of tea, but one who can do it would get a huge confidence boost and a feeling of pride. The researchers quote one of the examples of it :

In the year 2018, the researchers' school students participated at a short skit competition at *'AntarShala Gaurav GathaPratiyogita'* organized by BalBhavan Society, Vadodara which was directed by one of the academic teachers. The theme being 'Stories Hidden behind the Historical Buildings Monuments of India', the various performances conjured up watershed moments from the past. The students of their school put on a fine display of their acting chops in their item, ''मैं जालियावाला बाग''. An enactment based on the infamous massacre, the site of which has now been turned into a memorial, the studentsskillfully evoked the delicate nuances of the tragic event which still resonates in the hearts of all Indians!

Grows Innovativeness :

Learning of theatre pushes a child to think and imagine in more than one way, to grow mentally and creatively to be an innovative and creative individual. For instance, in the researchers' school, the teachers ask their students to direct a play based on a story written by them only. So this helps the children to express themselves and even put forth their thoughts and ideas in front of an audience.

Increase Concentration :

If there is no focus during practice, it is a futile effort. To achieve perfection it is essential to have concentration. This applies to academic studies as well. Sincere rehearsals help a child to develop concentration, which is very useful in his or her academic growth as a student as well.

Helps In Advancement Of Academic Career :

Theatre not only gives the child a much needed break from the academics but also freshens up and calms the young mind, giving him the ability to focus better on academics. A simple instance of this is how the 'Best Student Award' goes to the student who is an all-rounder, who has excelled in curricular as well as extra-curricular activities, and not to the student who has only ranked first in academics.

Supports In Building Teamwork :

Teamwork is extremely important in life, at work, at home, everywhere. Theatre encourages teamwork, as every student has to work with numerous team members who support his work and help him function smoothly to create things. To make this happen, teamwork is the key, which is a quality a child would imbibe from a young age if exposed and involved into theatre.

Teaches One A Responsibility Or Liability :

Taking responsibility for one's actions is important; it makes the person a better human being. Theatre inculcates this value of being responsible and taking responsibility for one's actions – no matter right or wrong. For instance, when rehearsing or performing in a play, if a student misses a dialogue, he is taught to acknowledge his or her error and work towards correcting it. Lessons learnt in these classes stay with the student for a lifetime, the values they learn there, influence the entire future of the student.

Conclusion :

Sharing our experiences,we too have been a part of various forms of theatre like street play, small skit, mime, etc. at different school events. We realized that it gave a great exposure to all the students for overcoming their stage fear and helped them to build uptheir self-confidence as they had to perform in front of a large number of audiences. Also, working in a team gave them a sense of co-ordination and get to learn countless things from their peers. Definitely, these events helped them in their education as well and increased their knowledge regarding theatre in education.

Therefore, as researchers, in our opinion, expressing anything through the form of theatre enhances the way of learning and makes it easy and simple for the children to understand and apply their learning in their life. Thus, the theatre brings out the hidden talent of children transforming their potentialities into realities.

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/_ngl_mx4Xnk

Enhancement of Social & Emotional Skills in Children using Dramatic Elements

Maharukh N. Bharucha

mahrukhbharucha@gmail.com

Abstract :

Positive communities are built on the foundation of well-rounded individuals with high IQ but higher EQ. Nurturing such young individuals, to then grow and raise the next generation of wholesome individuals needs skill, effort and intent. A society where "the mind is without fear and the head is held high" are not merely imaginative musings but a stage which global educators work towards tirelessly.

"Schools are Social Places, and Learning is a Social Process"

There is a body of evidence to confirm the long terms benefits of **Social Emotional Learning** (SEL) for all, especially students.

While an improvement in academic scores is a highly desired objective, social and emotional wellbeing have a profound, lifelong effect on behaviour, relationships and learning.

SEL evolves through the engagement of various channels – mostly Experiential Education - of which, in the indoors context, **DRAMA** has recorded the highest impact.

This paper intends to extol Drama as a simple, straightforward, and effective means to successfully bring reform to global attitudes in teaching and learning.
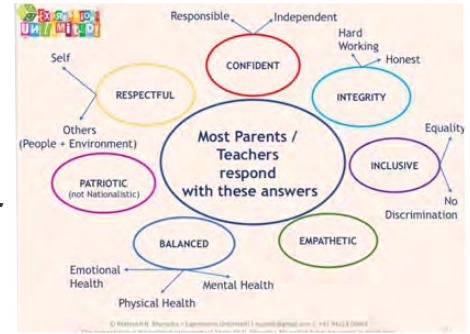
Synopsis :

- Drama is an effective means to improve SEL skills in children and young adults.

- Social Emotional Learning is the foundation of maturity in adults.

Introduction :

Question :

As a parent / teacher / education policy maker; what do you wish to see in your child when your child is 35 years old?

Answer :

Research (over time) has thrown up these responses, with slight cultural variations :

These values, when imbibed at a formative age, tend to make strong individuals who grow into conscientious citizens and become the pillars of a peaceful, progressive society.

> An attempt to list all the adjectives that we want our children to imbibe are found in the comilation: **Positive Personality Adjectives** and form the bedrock of balanced individuals.
>
> Link: **https://justenglish.me/2014/03/17/positive-personality-adjectives-list/**

Furthermore, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) recently released a fact sheet,that definesthe 7 core competencies that form career readiness as: (Williams)

1. Critical Thinking/Problem Solving.

2. Oral/Written Communications.

3. Teamwork/Collaboration.

4. Information Technology Application.

5. Leadership.

6. Professionalism/Work Ethic.

7. Career Management.

It is apparent that getting a college graduate to be "career ready" has a more to do than mere academic excellence. Career Success does not necessarily follow a graduation.

> Quote: *"You don't hire for skills; you hire for attitude. You can always teach skills."*
>
> ~~ Simon Sinek

Even 50% success in building **SEL through Drama (the key)**and imbibing these personal &/or professional qualities leads to immense transformations in individuals and society.

Definitions :

Social Emotional Learning :

"A developmental method for all age groups to maturely manage emotions and apply various skills like knowledge & attitudes to create and achieve goals. Helps to make one empathetic towards others and thus create and retain relationships. Empowers individuals to make informed and responsible decisions."(CASEL, 2013)

SEL Core Competencies :

The Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), is the leading organization advancing the promotion of integrated academic, social, and emotional learning for all children in preschool through high school.

CASEL addresses 5 broad & interrelated areas of competence & highlights examples for each :

- ✓ **Self-Awareness :** How one's behaviour is shaped by our own thoughts and emotions. This skill includes identifying emotions, self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence.

- ✓ **Self-Management :** Situational behaviours and channelising energy towards specific goals. This skill identifies with self-discipline, self-regulation, stress-management.

- ✓ **Responsible Decision-Making :** Proactively making choices and then taking onus of the results. This skill hones the analysis, reflection and problem solving.

- ✓ **Social Awareness :** Empathy is the cornerstone of this skill. Respect and accepting differences is subtly encouraged.

- ✓ **Relationship Skills :** One's ability to initiate and retain human associations. Communication and Cooperation are the skills needed here.

Drama :

The Imagination, Enactment and Reflection of human experiences by participants in an improvised setting guided by a leader. This form of Drama need not be for exhibition but for self-realisation. (Usakli, Drama Based Social Emotional Learning, 2018)

Improvisation :

Using Improvisation

To improvise is to invent and create content on your feet. Improvised drama is work that hasn't been scripted but is made up as you go along. It's important not to block the members of your group when improvising but accept and try out their ideas. This will encourage you all to run with an idea rather than try and direct or plan the improvisation.

Improvising is an excellent way to generate new content and explore ideas when devising drama. The beauty of it is that because it's unplanned you never know entirely where the scene might take you or what the other actor you are working with might say. This can make for an exciting and fun way to experiment and create work.

Spontaneous improvisation which is completely unplanned can generate dialogue or scenarios that you feel work for the piece you are creating. This can then be refined, rehearsed and included in your finished devised piece.

Improvising is also a wonderful way of sharpening acting skills. Being completely in the moment and open to what is happening improves listening and responding onstage, builds rapport, sharpens the wits and improves confidence as a performer. You can improvise from a theme you've discovered in a script or you can create a completely new scene from a play.

Look at : Script and Improvisation for more information. (https://www.bbc.co.uk)

©https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zts9xnb/revision/1

The Case for SEL through Drama :

All educators face the following dilemma :

Should we try to teach children **:**

- WHAT to think? (facts / knowledge / theories / calculations)

Or

- HOW to think? (critical thinking / problem solving / attitudes /

The2020 pandemic proves irrevocably that we need to empower our children with tools that enable the "how" to think aspects and thereby equip them for an increasingly uncertain world.

Everyone has had to adapt. Schools, teachers, education systems, parents, have all collaborated as effectively and efficiently as possible. We now want our children to imbibe this adaptability, resilience and positive attitude in perpetuity.

Even the latest draft national education policy tries to integrate the arts into mainframe education – so that our children are taught the 'how' rather than the 'what' to think concept for future readiness. When Drama is used to do this, the process will be smooth, and the impact lifelong.

In his book, **All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten -** Robert Fulghum (Fulghum) enlists some of the key learnings from our childhood days which include the seemingly simple skills of

- Sharing – things, toys, food

- Non-violence – which eventually supports anger management

- Honesty – Playing fair with all, respecting ownership

- Order and Cleanliness

- Health and Hygiene

- Good eating habits

- A balance of rest and activity

- Supporting each other leads to 'collaborative' behaviour

These life lessons are and appropriate for :

- kindergarten

- middle & high school

- college

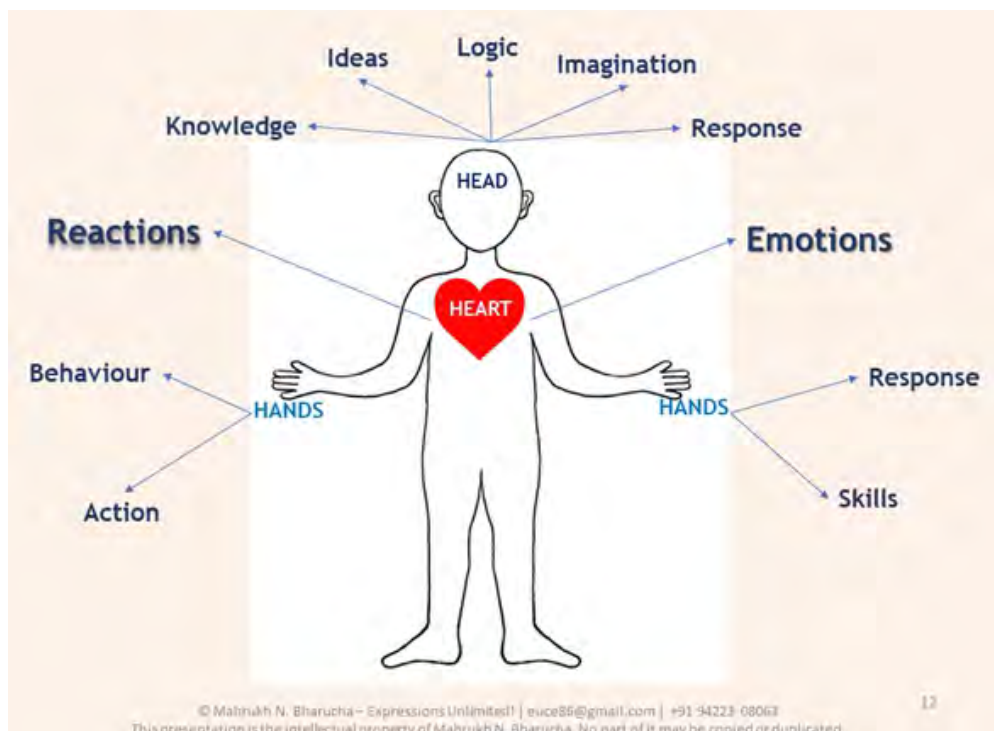- adults – personally and professionally

- families

- friends

- communities & neighbourhoods

- and to states and nations

Drama meaningfully and relevantly illustrates how important these skills are; through its various activities which be used to expedite the change that we wish to bring about today and almost 'freeze' for the future.

Drama addresses the 3Hs :

- Head : Intellect / thoughts / attitudes / rationality / reasoning / control / conscienceness

- Heart : Emotions / impulses / urges / temptations / unconscienceness

- Hands : skills / abilities / actions

An ideal individual would have balanced emotions, a healthy outlook to life and skills that evolve and get updated with time.

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In this context, the **Essential Human Qualities** that we all aspire to, include :

- Confidence
- Patriotism
- Empathy
- Passion & Enthusiasm
- Kind & Responsible
- Intuitive
- Courage
- Leadership
- Balanced health (Emotional, Mental & Physical)

- Inclusiveness
- Respectful
- Imagination &Creativity
- Be a Good Listener
- Persuasive
- Integrity and Honesty
- Lifelong Learner

Drama = Simulator of LIFE :

In my 35 years of working with kids – using drama – I have devised my personal metaphor for Drama Training :

Drama is to children (and lifeskills training) what flight simulators are to student pilots.

We never expect a pilot to fly solo or with passangers onboard without first getting ample simulator training and practice. Besides the technical handholding, a student pilot needs a gentle build up of the mental and emotional courage needed to fly a plane and subsequently take responsibility for several souls onboard.

LIFE and LIFE-SKILLS are to a child what the midair cockpit is to a pilot.

DRAMA is to a child what the simulator is to a student pilot – a safe training ground for future readiness.

Example: Conflict resolution is often 'taught' in corporate training programs via role play. In a Drama session – kids are allowed to argue, spar, agree to disagree, value non-judgemental attitudes, respect privacy & confidentiality and even begin serious dialogues about individuality and universitality.

Activity: 2 students role play an argument. As things heat up, a designated monitor (or teacher) shouts "Freeze". Both 'frozen' students then have to articulate their thoughts aloud. This allows the

audience some very useful insights into the mindset and emotional status of both aggressors. The learning is profound.

Drama teaches children how to open themselves up to different points of view and outcomes; to understand the difference between "Text", "Sub-text" and "Context" i.e. what is said, what is unsaid (the actual words vis-a-vis reading between the lines, body language, expressions, gestures / mannerisms and eventually - the implied meaning).

Conventional pedagogy almost never address these elements. Drama does.

The research is compelling. In the USA - for every dollar invested on SEL they have eventually saved 11 Dollars. As the life of the child was transformed by higher SEL through robust Drama programs introduced early in a child's life, the child becomes more aspirational. Children found a way to imagine a better life. Dependency on substances reduced dramatically. An entire generation imagined a way out from debilitating poverty. They imagined a better world.

Studies have shown some of the other outcomes of SEL

- Peaceful Conflict Resolution

- Respect the right to disagree

- Express your 'real' concerns

- Share common goals and interests

- Open yourself to different points of view and outcomes

- Listen carefully to all that is said and unsaid

- Understand the major issues involved

- Think about probable alternative solutions

- Offer some reasonable compromises

- Negotiate mutually fair cooperative agreements

© Source Study by Dr Robert E. Valett. Psychologist, Author

Humans, like all animals are driven by emotions. We **FEEL**, we **THINK** and we **ACT.** Most people categorise emotions only into the broader: *Happy, Sad, Angry, Afraid.*

A Drama class organically builds a more exhaustive vocabulary which leads to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of at least the following emotions :

Image Source: (Roberts, 2015)

Drama Games, Improvisation, Role Play, Text Readings, Response to Stimulii, Hot-seating, Mirroring, Conscience Alley – these tools enable a parent/teacher to work with children in an imaginary world.Children begin to learn the value of **RESPONSE v/s REACTION**. They learn that every interpersonal problem *(Micro: relationships | Macro: corporate / national / international strain)*arises because we reacted rather than responded.

Through Drama in the Classroom, we can set up differently provoking situations that compel children to consider :

✓   Do we react with anger or in good humour?

✓   Do the stimuli provoke thought or reflexive action?

✓   Am I governed by impulse - where the outcomes could be aggravation rather than equanimity?

✓   How do we train our minds to think a situation through before uttering a single word or any action?

The Reaction - Response Paradigm ™ (Abraham) :

Reacting	Responding
✗ Short-sighted	✓ Visionary & Goals Driven
✗ Passive Aggressive	✓ Values Driven
✗ Emotional	✓ Comes from Knowledge
✗ Poor Communication	✓ Connected Communication
✗ Overreacting	✓ Focus on Facts
✗ Jumps to Conclusions	✓ Pre-Thought-out
Leads to more Issues	**Leads to more Solutions**

Conditioning is key to the way we react and respond. Having a thought-through reaction, is a response taken 'consciously'. Training the 'consciousness' thus becomes the key between a reflex reaction, to a 'planned' response.

And herein lies the key of the "**Pause**". A pause to 'breathe', to reflect, ruminate and let one's **consciousness** overrule the **'conditioning'.** The choice to think and react empathetically, responsibly and reasonably.

It is the Pause that allows one to think, reflect, consider, plan words and then act. In conventional families/classrooms, this is easier said than done. A Drama enabled space, however, provides an opportunity to breathe, relax (body & mind), imagine, visualise, engage safely, reflect and practice these behavioural aspirations, right from an early age.

Developmental psychologist Stephanie Jones and her research team at the Harvard Graduate School of Education have undertaken comprehensive studies to understand *"What makes SEL work" (Shafer, 2016)*

Their findings - developed as part of a research project called **SECURe** *(Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Understanding and Regulation in education)* - show that a successful SEL program involves "all the adults in the building being trained in and familiar with a set of language and practices that they can use in the hallways, in the gym, at recess, in the lunchroom, on the bus — all the times when kids have less structure, and are actually engaging in social interactions, when emotions are more likely to come up," says research manager Rebecca Bailey.

Jones's team identifies three main "buckets" of skills, based on their analysis of SEL programs and a comprehensive review of the developmental literature :

- **Cognitive regulation skills**. Also called executive function skills, this bucket includes working memory, cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control, and attention control.

- **Emotion skills**. This group includes emotion knowledge and expression, emotion behaviour and regulation, and empathy and perspective taking.

- **Interpersonal skills**. Also called the social domain, this bucket includes prosocial behaviours and skills, the ability to understand social cues, and conflict resolution.

Imagine every parent/teacher also being skilled enough to use Drama as an intervention tool – preventive and curative – for SECURe development.

Our Parenting and Teaching education system needs to acknowledge that the primary caretakers of future generations would be phenomenally empowered if they had the necessary tools to use Drama in Education.

Once a child gets consistent signals at home, in school and during extra-curricular activities, the magical transformation will be expedited manifold.

Social and Emotional Learning – Impression :

"Given the importance of practice for skill mastery and the influence of adults and peers outside of the school, it is also important to coordinate classroom instruction in social and emotional development with school, family, and community activities"

(Albright & Weissberg, 2009; Nation et al., 2003; Weare & Nind, 2011).

There is evidence to suggest that for the holistic development of the young adults, a living collaboration needs to exist between the Family and School. An active participation of learning (not just academics) needs to exist from the family. Only then will the students get to receive and practice consistent messages in varied life situations.

In conclusion, my question would be :

HOW? How do we imbibe these qualities in our children?

The simple answer would be :

Teach the adult educators first - through regular pre-natal and parenting training sessions; inclusion of Drama in Teacher Education; and making Drama an important part of existing teachers' CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

The more realistic answer is : Drive the change vertically and horizontally – and start NOW!

DRAMA is a learned skill and doesn't need teachers to be great artists themselves. Qualitative and quantitative checks can be included in the system to assess progress and efficacy.

> **Drama enables Improvisation: (https://www.bbc.co.uk)**
>
> **Observations :**
>
> - Helps to deal with mental blocks
>
> - Begin at the very beginning of a situation
>
> - Encourages voicing of a pre-existing opinion – (and reflection)
>
> - The flow in tangential directions can change the tempo
>
> - Allows for failures and to start afresh
>
> - Participants are empowered to explore beyond the 'here & now'
>
> - Theory and Academics can be subtly explored.
>
> - Explore the joys of innovation

Highlight the fact that drama when used in a classroom, must be :

- improvisational

- non 'exhibitional'

- neither process centred nor process driven

- has no preconceived outcomes (always open to outcome)

Parents and Teachers who find this requirement overwhelming need to consider :

SEL encourages to **"Own your Learning"**, where the focus the brought back to the "I", who is continually evolving. (Unknown, 2014)

Before you say, "I'm through", ask yourself :

- Did I do my best?

- Did I include everything that was required? Did I check the success criteria?

- Did I seek, listen to, accept, and use the peer / teacher feedback?

- Is there anything I can improve?

- Is there a way for me to go above and beyond?

- Am I satisfied that this is the best I can do?

Source : Article from grade8fieldcrest.blogspot.ca "Own Your Learning"

Fieldcrest - Grade Eight : Own Your Learning, Student check-in before saying "I'm done"

The above citation is in the context of eighth graders – so what's holding you back?

Once parents/teachers can structure a learning session that allows students to take ownership and ensures that specific topics are discussed/coveredorganically through inquiry/discovery – the magic WILL unfold.

A metaphor for Drama to Real Life :

"Cry in the Dojo, Laugh on the Battlefield"

Sourced from : The Japanese book "gorin no sho" translated as "Book of Five Rings" was written by Japan's preeminent swordsman Miyamoto Musashi. Around 1645 he wrote The Book Of Five Rings which records his teachings in sword fighting and combat training strategy. As well as being a master swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi was also a renowned calligrapher.

Drama is that 'Dojo' (the simulator) to help prepare for the Battlefield of life.

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Skill Development through Drama in the Middle Years Program of International Baccalaureate

Saket Raje

saket.raje@oberoi-is.org

1. Introduction :

International Baccalaureate famously known as IB provides a framework for curriculum development for schools to create a challenging educational platform to develop international citizens. The framework focuses highly on the five recognized skills known as approaches to learning viz, thinking, social, communication, self-management, and research skills. All subjects offer opportunities for students to develop and practice the identified skills. Schools develop a program based on the framework that identifies discrete skills that can be introduced, practice, and consolidated in the classroom and beyond. This essay will discuss how the skill-based approach to teaching and learning drama in the middle year's program, grade 6 to 10, age 11 to 16 holistically develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring individuals. In the process, we will analyze methods used by educators and teachers to develop IB recognized as well as subject-specific skills. This paper will give an insight into international education and its approaches to teaching Arts. The paper will also explore the development of skills through drama across the Primary, middle, and diploma programs of the IB. Starting with the insight into the IB program this paper discusses the development and implementation of a skills-based program for drama, which aims to achieve IBO's mission of developing lifelong learners and international citizens. This paper aims to shed some light on the importance of skill based teaching and learning which focuses on the holistic development of students to become lifelong learners.

2. International Baccalaureate :

What is the International Baccalaureate?

The International Baccalaureate will be called IB in the essay, was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in the year 1968. The IBO provides education programs and frameworks for schools and students age 3

to 18. The initial idea for IB was introduced in the international school association's conference as "a passport for higher education". The diploma program, DP, was first introduced in the 1970s, followed by primary, PYP, and middle years program, MYP was introduced in the 1980s. In the year 2012 IB introduced a career-related program, CP. Currently, there are around 5000 IB world schools in the world. Ib offers the following four programs -

Program	Grades	Age Group
Primary years program (PYP)	Grade 1 to 5	3 to 12
Middle years program (MYP)	Grade 6 to 10	11 to 16
Diploma years program (DP)	Grade 11 and 12	15 to 18
Career-related program		15 to 19

For this paper, we will look at MYP.

Middle years program in IB :

MYP is the second program introduced by IB in the year 1994. For MYP there has to be a minimum of 50 teaching hours for all 8 subject groups. Eight subject groups are Language acquisition, language, and literature, Individuals and Societies, Sciences, Arts, Physical education, and Design. From year 1 to 3 of MYP all subject groups are compulsory depending on the school's culture and availability schools can choose which arts subject to offer. Arts is further divided into performing and visual arts. Schools have a choice to offer all the arts or select from Visual arts, Music, and Drama.

IB MYP curriculum :

MYP curriculum cycle is a learner-centric approach towards education. IB promotes the development of IB learner profiles in students using the three core elements and through teaching and learning in the subject areas. Learner profiles are qualities that IB learners should demonstrate, practice, and enhance.

Three core elements are Service action, Community project, and Personal project which are mandatory for students to complete at various stages in MYP. The outermost circle embodies the IB mission statement of developing international-mindedness. There is freedom for schools to develop the curriculum based on the school's culture and accessibility of the resources. This provides schools an opportunity to be unique and different from other schools. After MYP students select 6 subjects for the diploma program. IB encourages schools to practice inquiry-based learning.

The inquiry-based learning model :

The Inquiry-based Learning Model arose during the 1960s, during the "disclosure learning" development, and depends upon the possibility that people can learn by researching situations and issues, and through social encounters. Instead of remembering data from printed materials, teachers urged their understudies to lead examinations that would fulfill their interest, assist them with expanding their insight base, and build up their abilities and mental casings. Inquiry-based learning is a process that encourages intellectual engagement and deeper understanding. It urges students to develop research, questioning, and communication skills. It also develops collaboration outside the classroom and develops social and life skills. It helps to develop problem-solving skills and tackle real-life problems.

This is why inquiry-based learning includes the following steps :

- Ask questions

- Probe into various situations

- Conduct analyses and provide descriptions

- Communicate findings, verbally or in writing

- Think about the information and knowledge obtained

3. Skills in IB MYP :

"A skill is the learned capacity to carry out predetermined results and/or the ability to choose and perform the right technique at the right time, effectively and efficiently."

ATL are deliberate strategies, skills, and attitudes that permeate the IB teaching and learning environment. ATL supports the IB belief that a student's education is largely influenced not only by what is learned but how learning occurs. Teaching students how to learn has always been a part of the IB approach, but now the IB is providing more explicit support for teaching these skills, aligning the Diploma Program (DP) with the Primary Years Program (PYP) and the Middle Years Program (MYP). Focusing on ATL will improve the quality of teaching and learning across the Programs and may result in more engaged teachers and students. The IB Approaches to Learning are unarguably the most critical to procure not just with regards to a unit of request, yet additionally for any learning and encouraging that happens inside the study hall and in life outside of school. The five classifications and their separate sub-abilities incorporate what is required for a student in the 21st century. In this powerful, quick advancing world we need individuals who are learned as well as are likewise basic masterminds and problem solvers.

The ATL skills categories are :

1. Communications Skills : • Communication • Organizational • Reflection

2. Self-Management Skills : • Affective • Media Literacy

3. Research Skills : • Informational Literacy • Creative Thinking • Transfer

4. Thinking Skills : • Critical Thinking

5. Social Skills : • Collaboration

Throughout our written curriculum, the ATLs are strategically planned so that students have the opportunity to develop in all five skill areas. Teachers create opportunities for these skills to be developed at certain times within a unit of inquiry. Before a unit begins, teachers consider which ATL skill could be developed and then design learning engagements to allow students a chance to grow in a range of skill areas. By the end of a grade level, students have had multiple opportunities to develop within the five skill areas. Teachers use assessment and data analysis to determine how students are progressing in their acquisition of these skills. This valuable information is reported to students and parents and passed onto the next grade level teachers.

The table below clarifies the definition of the ATLs (Arts, 26) :

- **Thinking Skills :** Map the creative thought process in the art process journal to generate new ideas and questions.

- **Social Skills** : Work collaboratively in a production team with assigned roles and responsibilities.

- **Communication Skills :** Listen actively and endorse the views or opinions of others.

- **Self-management Skills :** Plan the rehearsal schedule for the performance or plan the time needed to create an exhibition.

- **Research Skills :** Create mood boards, sketches, and/or storyboards, which translate an idea into practice.

ATL and learning theory :

Considered as a whole and at the highest proficiency, MYP approaches to learning represent the skills that students need to become self-regulated, intrinsically motivated learners. MYP ATL skills reflect "dynamic, internally controlled . . . processes that positively influence a student's tendency to approach, engage with, expend effort on, and persist in learning tasks in an ongoing, self-directed manner" (McCombs, 1984).

Using the vocabulary of learning theory, ATL skills can be described as

- cognitive- learner-initiated use and practice of active information-processing and retrieval strategies

- affective (social and emotional)- self-management of mood, motivation, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward learning

- metacognitive- awareness, understanding, and control of personal learning processes.

ATL skills are informed by and support the development of the attributes of the IB learner profile. Drama as a subject provides an opportunity for students to develop these skills while studying drama specific abilities.

Subject-specific skills :

Apart from ATLs we also have subject-specific skills to focus in the everyday class and the unit. Subject-specific skills are skills developed to excel in the subject. For example, in drama voice is a skill that students should learn and excel in to develop acting and performance skills. During curriculum planning, it is important to map the development of the subject specific skills. Later in the essay, we will see an example of curriculum planning with ATL and subject-specific skill development.

4. Skills development through drama :

In this section, we will explore the role of drama in skill development. ATL skills are interconnected, many times skills are overlapped within the cluster or with individual and subject-specific skills.

Thinking skills :

Thinking skills are metacognitive skills. Thinking skills are divided further into three sections : critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, and transfer skills. Critical thinking skills cluster is where students analyze and evaluate ideas and issues. For this students need to identify the problem through observation, they will need to do further analysis to formulate the argument. Further, they will have to work on forming reasonable conclusions and generalizations. Students also work on developing factual, conceptual, and debatable questions by considering multiple perspectives. While forming a solution to the problems students identify the obstacles and challenges.

Topic and task	Focused Critical thinking skills	Focused Creative thinking skills	Focused Transfer Skills
Theatre of the Oppressed. Task - In the groups students will create a piece of newspaper theatre. Method of teaching - Through workshops in the class.	Practice observing to recognize the problem. • Interpret data • Evaluate evidence and arguments • Draw reasonable • conclusions • Analysis of complex concepts to create a new understanding	Use brainstorming to generate new ideas • Consider multiple perspectives • Creating novel solutions to real-world problems • Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas and products	Apply skills and knowledge in an unfamiliar situation • Inquire in a different context to gain a different perspective • Make connections between • subjects and disciplines

Creative thinking skills are generating novel ideas and constructing new perspectives. Students generate novel solutions to real-life problems. They can design new models, machines, and technologies. To form the novel ideas, students make guesses ask "what if" questions, and develop testable hypotheses. Developing multiple opposing and contradictory arguments are also part of the creative process.

Transfer skills are utilizing developed skills and knowledge in different contexts. It is also applying the skills to unknown situations. Transfer skills are also making connections between multiple subjects.

To understand the application and development of thinking skills through drama let's consider the following example. The following table will explain the connection between the IB prescribed skills and drama. This example is not a grade or level specific.

Social skills :

Under social skills, the main focus is on developing collaboration skills. Collaboration skills include practicing empathy, delegating, and sharing responsibility, and helping others to succeed. While working collaboratively students learn to take responsibility for their actions and manage and resolve conflict. Also, collaboration skills include making and fair and equitable decisions by building consensus. Collaboration also develops leadership skills. Receiving and giving feedback also comes under the collaboration. The following example will help to understand how collaboration can be incorporated in drama classrooms and planning.

Topic and task	Focused Social skills
• Collaboratively creating original theatre. • Task-based on given starting point groups develop original theatre. • Method - Exploration of theatre companies creating original theatre.	Delegate and share responsibility for decision making • Giving and receiving feedback • Negotiate effectively • Listen actively to others perspective and ideas • Build consensus

Communication skills :

Communication skills have two major factors to consider the first one is to exchange thoughts and information through effective interaction and the second is reading, writing, and using language to share and gather information. Developing communication skills means developing speaking and writing techniques for different purposes and audiences. It can also include non-verbal communication and giving and receiving feedback from peers and teachers. Developing media skills also comes under communication skills. Apart from this reading variety of sources, reading critically, taking effective notes, structuring and depicting information logically and academic writing will also come under this section.

The following table will establish the connection between drama curriculum and communication skills.

Topic and task	Focused Communication skills
Radio Drama Task-Based on a story develop a radio drama for a targeted audience Method - Writing exercise and workshops for developing a voice for performances	Read critically and for comprehension • Use of different speaking techniques for a variety of audience • Use appropriate writing techniques for a variety of audience • Write for different purposes • Organizing information logically

Self-management skills :

Self-management skills are further divided into the organization, affective and reflective skills. Organization skills consist of setting long and short goals, setting goals that are challenging and realistic, plan strategies and take actions to achieve the goals, organizing information, and select and use technology effectively and productively. Affective skills include managing state of mind, perseverance, emotional management, self-motivation, and resilience. It is also important to consider developing a positive attitude and reducing stress and anxiety in this category. Reflection skills start with maintaining a journal and reflection on new learning. It also includes reflecting on skill development and personal learning strategies.

The following example will show the link between theatre tasks and ATL skills.

Topic and task	Focused Organisation	Focused affective	Focused reflection
Physical theatre Task - Individually develop a physical theatre routine Method of teaching-Physical theatre	• Plan short and long time assignments and achieve it. • Setting goals that are challenging and realistic. Use appropriate information for organizing the information.	• Practice focus and concentration. • Practice analyzing and attributing causes for failure.	Keep a journal to record reflections • Focus on the process of creating by imitating the work of others • Demonstrate flexibility in learning strategies

Research Skill :

Research skills are further divided into two groups: information literacy and media literacy. Information literacy skills are finding, creating, judging, and creating information. This includes collecting, verifying, and recording data, making connections between various sources, presenting information in various formats, and processing data, and generating results. Evaluation of the data collected should be considered as an important factor. Creating referencing systems, citations, and using footnotes/endnotes and bibliography are also part of the information literacy skills.

Media literacy is interacting with media to use and create ideas and information. In short, it is to locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media. Communication of information and ideas by effectively using media will come under this section. The following example will further explain the connection between research skills and drama.

Topic and task	Focused Information literacy	Focused media literacy skills
Traditional theatre form Task - individually create a presentation about the research on selected traditional theatre form Method - Research	Access information to be informed and informed by others • Make a connection between various sources • Process data and report results • Understand and implement intellectual • property rights	Make informed choices about personal viewing experiences • Understand the impact of media representations and mode of presentations • Seek a range of perspectives from a range of sources • Communicate ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and format

As mentioned, ATLs are life skills that help develop the ability to learn, evaluate, and apply.

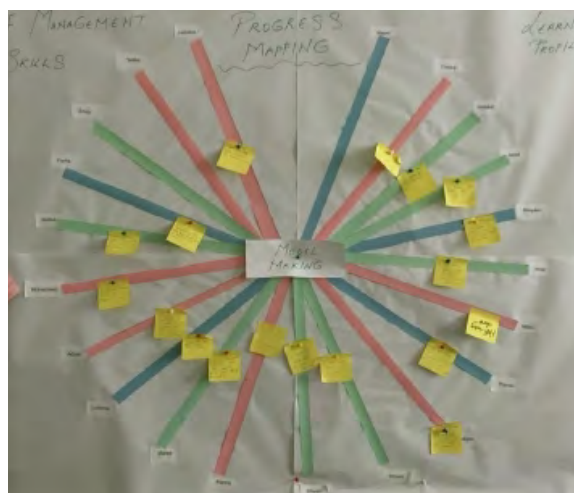**Curriculum planning with subject-specific skills and ATLs :** Curriculum planning should be well informed with the development of subject-specific skills and ATLs. There is a possibility that these skills overlap, it will be the educator's responsibility to identify and develop appropriate skills. The following example for grade 7 will draw connections between subject-specific skills and ATL.

In the example of "Red nose clowning" teachers will conduct a series of workshops to develop drama skills that students will require to perform as a clown. Workshops will be based on physicality, playing with objects, voice, the concept of the audience for clowning performances, and mime. Developing character, using masks will add responsibilities for students to learn and develop. Students are expected to create the 2-3 minutes performance based on drama skills developed. For creating a performance students will have to use ATL of "Creative thinking" from the Thinking skills cluster. Teachers are expected to explicitly teach the skills and map the development of the skills in students.

| Red Nose Clowning

Play is essential for innovation and creativity.

CONTENT : Basic improve skills to evelop character and situation, Mime. | Tasks

Big Top Clown Performance

Performance in pairs using clowning & mime conventions

• 2-3 minutes

• Students create a script for the internal monologue of their clown piece.

• They perform to an audience of their peers | Thinking : Creative Thinking Skills

Make unexpected and unusual connections between objects and/or ideas

• Create original works and ideas; use existing works and ideas in new ways |

5. Mapping skill development :

Mapping skills development of students is a continuous process, skills are developed in and out of the classroom. Mapping skills is a responsibility of all subject teachers, collectively a specific student's overall development in a specific skill can be mapped by collecting data from all teachers. Teachers use a variety of techniques to map the development of the skills. The image shown is the example from the grade 8 class, the teacher used a self-assessment method to map the students progress in the task as well as for skill development. The task was to create a model of set design for the selected play. On rays coming out from the center, students have to mark their progress in the task and also reflect on their self-management skills. Students have set short and long-term goals, and reflecting on the achievement of goals eventually comments on their development in the self-management skill area.

6. Conclusion :

Skill development is at the core of the IB MYP framework. IBO's mission identifies the importance of skill development through teaching and learning which will achieve the bigger aim of developing future generations and life-long learners. Skills development should not be considered as an added curriculum but it should be an integral and implicit plan that goes hand in hand with subject-specific teaching and learning. A well-informed skill development plan should be at the heart of the student-centric education framework.

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Finding Utopia in Worli Koliwada : an Exploration of Applied Theatre in an Urban Village.

Dr. Selina Busby

selina.busby@cssd.ac.uk

I have been working in what is now called applied theatre for over 20 years. Since 2006 I have been working on series of projects with Divya Bhatia in Mumbai and this work has shaped much of my thinking around the idea of applying theatre. Since 2015 I have been defining my work as a 'pedagogy of utopia'. I draw on Paul Ricoeur's work in which utopia does not mean the hope of a better place but rather the ability to recognize current circumstances, and from this understanding develop the desire and capacity to change these circumstances. Ricoeur claims, 'utopia is not only a dream, it is a dream that wants to be realised' (Ricoeur : 289).

In this, I am extending Ricoeur's notion that a utopia 'wants to be realised' and that therefore 'the intention of the utopia is to change' (Ricoeur : 289). When talking about the utopian desire to change in connection with my practice, I would not say my intention is to make change happen but rather to allow for the possibility of change so participants might see that there is the potential for them to create, choose and change.

This equates to Ricoeur's field of the possible, or a place where it is possible to re-examine what is, in order to see what might be. In other words, the concept of utopia contains anticipation or what both Bloch and Ricoeur call the 'not *yet*'. For both the 'not *yet*' is what *might be* and thus creates the possibility of change.

This consideration of the utopic in my work islinked to the search for hope and draws on both Henry Giroux and bell hooks. Concepts surrounding the fluidity of identities and futures pave the way here for a consideration of how theatre creates utopic spaces in which different futures can be imagined and invite aspirational thinking. The foundation on which these are built is deeply embedded and sustained partnerships. The work with Bhatia is an example of this. Over the last 15 years our partnership has worked with many of the same people when we started the work we did so with about 20 young people from Dharavi, 20 became 40 and 40 became 60. With 12 young people returning again and again each year – now the work has moved on but our team is essentially the same – with

the addition of two of twelve now working with us as facilitators.

The second principle of a pedagogy of utopia is the concept of social justice and why it is key in Applied Theatre that is practised in a neoliberal climate. Drawing on theories of cultural capital and critical race theory, it is the responsibility of the practitioner to create an equitable rehearsal room in which aspects of social justice can be explored. The third focus of my work is focuses on the politics of articulation and amplification, on the giving and taking of perspectives. The fourth is the concept of the third space I draw on the writings of Edward Soja to outline the geography of third spaces and Homi Bhabha to outline the concept culturally. I argue that 'safe spaces' (and 'brave spaces') in Applied Theatre should be replaced with the concept of third spaces and fifth element is that of resistance the idea that applied theatre creates spaces that resist inequity and neoliberalism.

As an example of these principles in action I will focus on a project entitled the *Voices of Worli Koliwada*, which takes place with women living in an urban village that is part of the mega city of Mumbai. In this project, the women created site-specific performance work about their hopes for spaces in which to live. This project has come to symbol a Pedagogy of Utopia for me and the cover of my book is a picture taken during its workshops it is one I am ridiculously attached to.

It has come to symbolize my practice and the equity of drama workshop where no group is privileged over the other. I am not sure if this image translates as that to others, perhaps it is because in this line of shoes, which is at once jumbled and ordered, I can recognize each individual participant – each facilitator, translator, co-researcher pair of shoes – and yet they are all afforded the same status in space that is so clearly a theatre space.

Worli Koliwada is situated on the coast at the southern tip of Mumbai. It is one of the oldest indigenous fishing villages in the region, believed to

have been established eight hundred years ago by a fishing community – the Kolis. Today it is a 65-acre area with over two thousand residents who are the descendants of the original four hundred or so Kolis, plus another nine thousand tenants (Singh 2018). Many of the tenants are recent arrivals and economic migrants. It is also the site of a British colonial fort built in the seventeenth century which sat across the bay opposite the Portuguese fort built in the same era. Today it is an area of densely crowded lanes, and it is so crowded that Maharashtra's Slum Rehabilitation Authority sought to declare parts of the village a slum in 2015 in order to deliver developmental funds (Johari 2015). Inhabitants rejected the slum label and argued vehemently that Worli Koliwada cannot be declared a slum because it is one of Mumbai's earliest settlements. A local article which reported on this disagreement commented that WorliKoliwada's infrastructure 'often blurs the lines between slum-style living and an urban village' (ibid.). Many of the inhabitants of the village are disadvantaged on both social and economic axes. The womxn who we have worked with there are disadvantaged further by their gender. The Koliwomxn are unusual in that they are active in the fishing industry. Although not usually part of the actual harvesting of the fish, they make and repair nets, prepare the fish for sale and often work as sellers both within the community and beyond. The income of the fishing families depends on the womxn completing these roles as well as the childcare, meal preparation and their other domestic duties. Their families' income is dependent on their labour and yet they themselves are not paid for their work. This lack of financial autonomy makes them prey to Fraser's (1997, 2005) injustices of redistribution, recognition and representation – the injustices that relate to the unfairness of the economic system and the exploitative work that it generates. They are denied respect and dignity based on their female identity, the work they do, the caste they are from and the difficulties of finding an organized community to amplify their voices to articulate their needs and rights as womxn, as workers and as citizens. The womxn in Worli are isolated by the long work hours and a caste system within the caste system, where the work they do connected with the fishing industry dictates where each womxn falls in the pecking order. The least respected duties and most unpleasant jobs reduce the womxn to the lower ends of the scale, where the weak and different are bullied and victimized. The isolated community reproduces the hierarchies from the outside world and constrains the womxn who live there.

For this project, my long-term collaborator, Bhatia, and I partnered with a local arts and culture organization called The G5A Foundation (G5A). G5A had three remits for the project: to celebrate the community and site of Worli Koliwada in line with resisting the slum authority's agenda to reclassify the area; to encourage the Koli community to use their cultural spaces and see the centre as part of their community landscape; and to enhance community spirit where the young womxn could support and comfort each other so they could gain strength in solidarity. In the summer of 2018 two of my postgraduate students joined Bhatia and Deembe to work with nearly two dozen of the womxn from Worli for three hours twice a week for five weeks. The sessions involved a range of theatre games, devising techniques and skills-sharing, often starting with a song and then some focus exercises. In the first sessions the young womxn were wary of the outsiders, often self-conscious and hesitant to

play with the students. They were withdrawn and shy, but as is usual, session by session, they relaxed. The students worked on storytelling games, creative writing exercises and some gentle performance skills for the first two weeks. The theme of the work became celebrating Worli Koliwada, and part of this process involved mapping the village and the spaces in which the womxn felt comfortable or had particular memories to be celebrated. The workshop space became a thirdspace of cultures forged by the cultures of the womxn of Worli merging with the cultures of the students. This was an alternative space to the Worliwomxn's usual living and work spaces. These home and work spaces are all-consuming to these womxn and leave them with no time to call their own, often due to the cramped conditions in which they live, with no actual physical space for themselves. They describe themselves as always being responsible for someone or something else. In the thirdspace created by the workshops, they were for the most part released from their daily responsibilities and they had both the space and time to prioritize their own needs and desires. As part of the storytelling process they were encouraged to find spaces outside the workshop where this could and did happen. They decided they wanted to share these spaces with us and so we planned a walk that took the team through the lanes of Worli to stop in these spaces. A whole session was given over to the walk to explore the community.

We set off with the womxn leading the way through the lanes, across the village and parts of the beach to reach the fort. On the way the womxn chatted and were clearly excited to be leading the session. We arrived at the fort and climbed up into it. It offered a view of Worli, the sea and in the distance the high-rise buildings of central Mumbai. We stood and looked out from the vantage point and the translator and facilitators asked the womxn what this space meant to them and why it was important. The womxn grew silent and looked out at the sea. Ashwarya, a cultural worker from G5A, who had become one of the team and who had a strong bond with the womxn, gently encouraged them to tell us why they brought us here. It quickly became apparent that they led us here because they thought it was what we wanted to see. The fort represented the history of the village, as such it was a local landmark and had been used as a set for several films, but it was not a space the womxn themselves used.

One admitted that she had never stepped inside it before that day; the others murmured agreement that this was their first time within its walls. Once this secret was out the more familiar workshop sense of fun and enthusiasm developed and it became possible for me to ask, 'If this isn't a place of stories that has meaning – where are the spaces that do have meaning to you?' After a brief discussion, the womxn settled on the next place they intended to take us – a site just a few hundred yards from the fort. Off we set, walking and chatting until we arrived at the recently renovated seven-hundred-year-old Golfa Devi Mandir Temple. The womxn found the priest and asked him to explain to us the history of the temple. Deembe translated: this is the temple where the Koli fishermen prayed for a good catch and where you can ask the goddess to answer your questions. By placing what appeared to be magnets on a statue of the goddess, she would answer yes or no to any question you

posed; if the right magnet fell off first, the answer is yes, if the left slides off first, the answer is a no. The womxn watched our reactions and looked pleased with the story. The priest left us to continue with his work and again the womxn fell silent. For a second time Ashwarya encouraged them to tell us why this building was important to them, and again they said nothing. I gently teased the womxn saying that I didn't believe this was a site of personal importance to them because their silence implied otherwise. They laughed with me and agreed there were better places to show us, but they had thought we would want to see the temple. I asked again, 'Where is the place to tell stories that celebrate Worli Koliwada?'

We moved off again, past the boats and the net repair station and arrived on a concrete jetty just as rain started to fall. We stood on the jetty where the fish are unloaded from the small boats onto the land and looked out to sea. Ashwarya asked again : 'Why here?' This time the womxn exchanged sideways glances and giggles with each other, and they explained that during Holi this became a womxn-only space for them to celebrate the festival. It was a place of song, dance and laughter. They recalled the last time they had been here and how the rain did not dampen spirits and as we stood there and the rain came down they started to sing. The song was soon accompanied by dancing and stories emerged of the evening a man invaded their space here and what they did to remove him. The scene was spontaneously acted out by several of the womxn. The stories got wilder and wilder and before long we were all soaked, but laughing, much to the bemusement of the men sheltering under a nearby boat hut. When the stories were done, we talked about why those Holi nights in this space meant so much to them. They told us it was because it was a womxn-only space, in which they had no responsibilities to anybody but themselves and that these evenings were truly evenings of much anticipated freedom that they longed for. In that moment, the focus for the rest of the summer's work was decided. The workshop space would become a womxn-only space where they could make theatre with that same sense of freedom. We agreed as a group that in the following workshop we

would perform the songs and dances they chose and re-enact stories from those evenings of freedom. Our workshop space became a space for partying.

In the sessions that followed the male project leads, Bhatia and Deembe, were excluded from the space, to create a womxn-only environment; the windows and shutters were closed and the participants became more playful and shared Bollywood dance routines and songs that were swapped for the UK songs the students introduced. The Bollywood routines were raunchier than anything offered by my students. A key part of this process was the chai break midway through each session. The exchange of food became integral in these crucial moments. Food became a meeting point and the womxn started to bring festival-style food that they prepared at home especially for the sessions. Each offering was exchanged as a gift. In these tea breaks, the divisions between both groups of girls were relaxed; they laughed together and shared food and stories about their lives – they became friends. They became a group who came together as womxn without caste or class. In the final session in the first year of the Worli workshops the men were permitted back into the space to play games, hear stories and share the food. The womxn made freeze-frames and digital stories that celebrated their lives in Worli. The participants inscribed the place in which we were working with new meanings: play and creativity in a place that appears to have little room for play, and equity for the participants. The fishing dock during the Holi festival and the workshop space have become synonymous, the latter becoming a thirdspace of resistance where the womxn come together to celebrate.

In the same year, 2018, the last two workshops for the womxn took place in the black box studio space of G5A. The womxn arrived by taxi and again treated these sessions like a festival by dressing up for the occasion. At first nervous of this strange environment the womxn soon took over the space, as if they had played in a theatre space all their lives. They made tableaux and short scenes about the migration of farm workers to the city, water shortages and drought, their children's obsessions with mobile technology and games, family conflicts, and the lack of space for their children to play in and in which they themselves could relax. There was no audience apart from the facilitation team; however, each scene was reworked to perfection and said something about

contemporary life in Worli Koliwada and beyond. After the sessions the theatre provided tea and snacks and the womxn chatted excitedly about the work. Asked if they wanted to repeat the experience, they agreed that they would because the workshops had given them time for themselves and they wanted this to continue. The respite from their daily routines was welcomed and they talked about the confidence the work had given them to speak about things they had not given voice out loud or in public to before. The drama had allowed them to talk about the things that worried them that they felt unable to change: space, water, overcrowding, hopes and fears for their children.

Between summer 2018 and 2019 the team in India ran twelve sessions for the womxn in which they continued to create theatre and talk about their concerns. In June 2019 we established two groups, one for the womxn from the first year and a second for newcomers. After several sessions working separately, we brought both groups together in the G5A space. The team remained as it did the first year with the addition of two of the young people from the original Dharavi project who worked alongside us as assistant facilitators. Again, the womxn made pieces about life in Worli and their concerns; again lack of space became a prominent feature of the work. A recurrent theme of the work in both the theatre space and the workshop space in Worli itself related to the spaces the womxn travelled through daily or had played in during their childhoods. As a group we therefore decided to take the workshops into these spaces. Two spaces were chosen in the lanes of Worli which were wide enough to fit us all.

As we worked, a crowd, curious to see what was going on, developed around us drawn in by the laughter and singing, and the unusual spectacle of groups of female Worli residents, theatre professionals and six students performing. What was going on was the creation of three sets of freeze-frames devised by the womxn working in three groups. The frames depicted how the womxn

used the space as children, how they used it now and how they would like to use it in the future. The tableaux were fused together with movement and song and in one afternoon's work, we ended up with three short depictions of the past, present and possible future. The scenes of the past included the womxn as children, not necessarily as themselves but showing how children used the spaces. These scenes depicted children playing hide-and-seek and hopscotch and one riding a bicycle or, rather, three womxn helping a fourth to learn to ride a bicycle. The womxn on the bicycle declared that she had never had the opportunity to do such a thing and so the others literally supported her and pushed and held the bike while she peddled. It was a beautiful moment that reminded us all what it felt like to be children again. The present scenes included a moment where the space was used as part of a religious festival, which it had actually been used for the day before. This involved womxn winding ribbons around a tree trunk seven times each, in order to bind their husbands to them for the next seven lifetimes, cleaning, sweeping and washing the space and carrying food to relatives, and sending children to school. The final set of scenes showed the womxn sitting and talking, sharing secrets and friendships, and teaching each other how to use financial packages and spreadsheets on a laptop and to do household finances on the computer. The progression from scene to scene each time was very moving; the movement from childhood joy to the burden of responsibility, to caring for each other was remarkable to witness.

For Sally Mackey, performance in everyday spaces enables a 'dull and embedded' place to 'be defamiliarized and re-envisioned' (Mackey 2016: 107). In this project the lanes of Worli Koliwada had been defamiliarized, re-envisioned and reclaimed by the womxn. The impromptu, unintended public performance of these pieces turned the spaces into a geography of resistance through the womxn's anarchic play and vision of the future. Their presence in them, at this time of day, was active

resistance. Their performances were highly political in their demand for social and spatial justice: their thoughts about their community, their lives and hopes were amplified and represented. Most importantly, their visions of what they wanted for the future, while steeped in the reality of their circumstances, were tangible. These womxn showed us the not *yet*, and the *what might be*.In doing so, they shared their utopic vision – a utopic vision that could now be created in a thirdspace that offered a space of resistance.

The thirdspace as a site of resistance then, in WorliKoliwada's community hall, the lanes of the village and the black box studio of G5A, is a space in which participants can explore and reflect on their relationship to places they inhabit and their own identities. A dialogic performance process that engages critical thinking in a thirdspace invites participants to reflect on the processual nature of both identities and spaces. This potentially invites an inverting of everyday spaces and identities; both people and places in a process of 'becoming', neither a finished nor complete thing. A pedagogy of utopia in a thirdspace welcomes perspective giving and taking, amplifies multiple voices and storytelling, and facilitates imagined and future stories, identities, aspirations and justices, both social and spatial. It is a thirdspace in which challenges to the status quo and risky notions can be embraced, where womxn can use the lanes of their village to teach each other, where male prisoners can be fathers to their children, where shelter-dwelling youth can enter culturally elite spaces or where young people can disrupt institutions by their mere presence. They are spaces where people would not usually meet on equal terms; police officers and youth of the global majority, Indian sub-city inhabitants and students from an elite London drama school, or sex-trafficked young people and Golden Globe winners can work together to create theatre and new knowledge while opening up to each other and critiquing their own worlds. They are spaces which defy the usual order of things that are separate from our everyday lives and in which new worlds can be imagined and in which utopic thinking is not disparaged. They are radical, political spaces of resistance.

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/016rF4TUMxM

Applying Playback Theatre to Explore Diversity & Inclusion in Corporates

Radhika Jain

firstdrop.theatre@gmail.com

Abstract :

This paper aims to explore how Playback Theatre (PT) can be used as an effective tool by organizations to address Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) at the workplace. It reflects on First Drop Theatre's experience of using PT as an intervention tool in different types of organizations; to help them gain a deep understanding of the feelings and challenges that their workforce currently has around this topic, as well as to have the participants gain a wider perspective through the power of shared, real-life stories. The feedback, both from the participants and the management at these organizations indicated how using PT as an intervention model had helped go beyond the cognitive and unearth deeper insights both for the individual as well as the organization.

Why did we choose Playback Theatre (PT) as an intervention method?

Playback Theatre (PT) is an improvisational/non-scripted, interactive community-based format of theatre founded by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas in 1970's where the actors play out real-life stories and moments shared by the audience members - with text, movement, images, sounds and metaphors. In Playback, the participant becomes a storyteller and they witness an actor playing them in the improvisation. Storytelling and spontaneity are the basis for Playback Theatre. Participants are guided by a trained conductor to tell stories from their lives which are then played and replayed to the teller's satisfaction. Jo Salas, in her book on Playback Theatre, writes about the process based on her close working relationship with husband Jonathan Fox, "When we weave our experience into stories, we find meaning in what we have undergone. Telling our stories to others helps us to integrate the story's meaning for us personally. It is a way, too, for us to contribute to the universal quest for meaning. The intrinsic element of form in a story can transmute chaos and restore a sense of belonging to a world that is fundamentally purposeful after all. Even the most desperately painful of

experiences are in some way redeemed when they are told as stories."[1] PT enables a forum of dialogue, shared emotions, self-reflection and deep connections. It also offers a safe space for different groups of people to be heard, especially those voices that might be silenced or left out from the public discussions in the communities.

Gender dynamics at the workplace in India :

The DivHERsity Benchmarking Report 2019[2] conducted by JobsForHer stated that a significant gender gap exists at all levels in the Indian companies, and that this gap widens as we move towards the senior management levels. Several factors including access to employment, working conditions, the need to balance the competing burdens of work and family responsibilities etc. are cited as some factors, among others, that are at play here. In recent years, organizations have taken several initiatives to address the overall gender gap and these include focussed hiring programs, specific D&I goals and sensitisation of the workforce. However, industry analysts say that there can be more that needs to be done in this regard and here's where, they say, that Allyship can play a crucial in positively addressing not just the gender gap but overall in bringing about greater inclusivity on all counts[3,4]. In India, where the workforce in organizations comprise of people from different backgrounds - regions, languages, customs, beliefs etc. - allies at workplace have an important role to play in making each other feel included.

Exploring D&I through Playback Theatre :

First Drop Theatre, was invited by two organizations to engage with their employees on the broader theme of D&I. What was interesting was how these two organizations, vastly different to each other in terms of their overall setup and working culture, looked to address the subject but from different angles. The first organization, a large company with a strong hierarchical structure, looked to address the issue of gender gap. The other organization, a MNC with a more open culture, was introducing the concept of allyship as a means to have inclusion as a key tenet of their work culture.

The missing voice and perceptions :

The gender gap, especially at the higher levels in an organization in India, is quitebig with the women representation at the middle levels and senior levels being as low as around 20% and 11% respectively[5]. In the first organization that we worked with, this ratio was further skewed with women making up only 8% of the workforce. At this place, we were invited to perform PT for a group of middle-level managers who were undergoing a two-day Gender sensitization program. The idea was to use PT to explore how leadership was viewed through the prism of gender.

We had approached the performance keeping in mind that, given the structure and culture of the space, the group might not be used to openly sharing their feelings. Therefore, the conductor first got the audience members to talk about themselves; what they felt were generally easy or difficult for them as leaders. These feelings were reflected back by the actors using quick fluid sculptures (short format in PT). This helped to get the group into sharing mode.

The group seemed to relax post these initial exchanges and what followed was a wonderfully free-flowing conversation where their existing perceptions were shared in the open through their personal experiences and stories.What emerged was that the women felt that their voices were often missed while the men in the group mentioned about feeling inhibited while interacting with women as they were worried about how they were being perceived. The women mentioned how they felt they had to work much harder to be perceived to be as good as a man doing the same job. Watching these perceptions being enacted seemed to help the group open up on situations where the stereotypes played out strongly.

We dived deeper into these perception models by looking at how the men and women in the audience viewed each other specifically as leaders. By now the participants had warmed up to the idea of sharing. The awareness that the space was open to all voices and perspectives seemed to bring about uninhibited sharing. This was seen in how they not only pointed out what they felt were the strengths of the other gender as leaders but also shared what they felt were the not-so-strong points. The men, for example, felt that while the women leaders are very focussed and task-driven, they fail to take risks. The women felt that the men do a good job of delegation but are not always sensitive. The actors played back these feelings through the use of metaphors.

A key observation that emerged through these sharing was that many a time, the individuals were not consciously aware that they were being discriminatory. When they heard the experience from the standpoint of others and watched the enactment by the actors, they seemed to become more aware of possible discriminations. After watching the acts, when the conductor checked back with the audience, they mentioned that these were like new perspectives that they were seeing to everyday situations. This included incidents in situations like regular work-place meetings, specific project discussions and even team outings. An interesting revelation was about how a similar situation was perceived differently by leaders from the two genders. A lady manager shared about an incident where she was the lone woman in a meeting with a group of men, and how she felt the men were insensitive to her presence and that she felt uncomfortable. A male member from the audience mentioned about another meeting where there was only one woman present and he observed that his male colleagues were not being sensitive to her presence in the way they cracked certain jokes etc. He said that he did not make it a point to react by speaking up for the woman as he wasn't sure if he should make this to be a gender related thing as it could just be that in a group, some people, irrespective of gender might be ok with certain things while others might not be. The actors used the format of corridors to reflect the thoughts of both the tellers from a similar situation. Post the

depictions, both the tellers mentioned how they were now reflecting a bit deeper about their assumptions and expectations. While talking further about challenges faced, a lady participant spoke about the time during an office off site when she, being the lone woman, felt restricted to reach out for help when she faced a scary situation. She said that she was hesitant to ask for help as she was worried about being judged. She reminisced about how she braved the situation on her own. This story was depicted by the actors in a long story format. When the act concluded, the audience group reflected that while the story was remarkable in terms of a person finding the inner strength, it allowed them to see the need for proactive inclusion and sensitivity.

Such stories freely shared by the participating audience members, we believe, reflected a welcome opportunity for them to share their views in an uninhibited manner. Given the highly hierarchical environment, PT showed promise in having the participants openup in a way they might not usually do. As they watched the stories being enacted, and then reflected on it, the participants mentioned that they had not earlier seen something from the perspective of the other gender at least in a very focussed manner. In this environment, where perceptions ran very strong and the traditional stereotypes were strongly prevalent, PT was going beyond the surface level of the persona and bringing out the motives, challenges and feelings of the person. By giving space to multiple voices, there was a chance for the audience members to see the common situations from the work environment, through different angles.

Becoming Allies :

The second organization we engaged with was a large MNC with a more open and less hierarchical set up. This organization had been running different D&I related programs over the years and were keen to bring in the understanding of allyship; how being allies to one another could bring about greater inclusion. For this event, we had partnered with another company, Shenomics, who were responsible for introducing the employees to the concept of Each for Equal. The facilitator walked the audience group through the theme and also led the group through a short meditation. She concluded with a short activity that the audience members had to do in pairs which involved some sharing with each other. Thus, when we began the PT performance, the audience were already slightly warmed up to the idea of sharing.

An interesting experience, for us as a PT team, was that we were to perform to an audience who were in different locations. This performance was in the early days of the Covid pandemic. While there wasn't yet a total shutdown in India, many organizations had already taken steps to avoid the gathering of many people at one place. So, while we had some people in the room as audience, there were many others who joined virtually. What we didn't know then was that such virtual engagements were going to be the norm in the coming days and months! In hindsight, this early experience was

very helpful in understanding how PT can help hold the space even in a virtual world.

In contrast to the first organization, the participants here appeared more ready to open up without much prompting. This, most probably, could have been due to lack of strict hierarchal structures in the organization as well as due to the activity before the PT performance, that we spoke about earlier. Since the audience had just finished an activity of sharing with each other, the conductor started by asking how they felt to hear the other person out and also how they felt to be heard by the other person. The audience shared about how they felt a sense of familiarity with the other person, the joy of discovering something new about a person etc. The actors reflected back these feelings using Fluid Sculptures.

A shift happened when a leader (senior manager) in the group shared his experience of how he missed having an ally when he was going through a crisis in the family and had to shift back to India from abroad. The actors played back the feeling of desperation, loneliness and anxiety in a format using poetry, movement and sound. This vulnerability, displayed by a leader, seemed to uncork a deeper sharing of personal stories from within the audience. It seemed to have encouraged the others to open up more about their emotions as they seemed to be having an assurance that PT was providing them with a safe space to go deep into their personal experiences. This opened up the space to stories where individuals reflected on situations where they could not be allies and what might have prevented them from becoming one.

Like in the story shared by a lady who spoke about how she assumed an initiative that she was doing would help a certain section of the society only to later realize that her perceived sense was inaccurate. She openly spoke about how the experience made her realize that she was privileged and was operating from that space. She reflected on how the experience made her aware of how much more can be done if she were to be an ally to that group.

This led to the point about what might be a deterrent to being an ally? Were perceptions and assumptions playing up for all? Or were there other experiences that might be holding them back? Among other things, an erosion of trust due to a past experience emerged as a point. One person opened up about how an earlier experience, of trusting someone only to be let down, made him wary of similar situations. He spoke about this lack of trust cast a doubt in his mind for a long time until one day when a stranger's act of kindness reaffirmed his confidence to be an ally. We used the Narrative-V format to show the journey of the teller's emotional state. As these stories were shared, there was a perceptible shift in how others in the room, and those connected remotely, were beginning to voice their concerns, vulnerabilities and changed perceptions.

The aspects of privilege, region, religion and gender, and how these influence the notion of ally-ship were reflected upon by the group in the context of their personal stories. The mindful reflections of different individuals about regular situations made it relatable to the larger group.

The role of Narrative Reticulation :

Jonathan Fox's Narrative reticulation theory[6] which is still in construction, is built on four main aspects - story, spontaneity, atmosphere and guidance. Story includes memorizing, order and a sense of aesthetic. Spontaneity refers to being present to events of the situation, ability to cooperate and Genuity or acting as oneself. Atmosphere covers being a human in front of other humans, being inviting and inclusive toward to audience, oneness between the audience and the performers and shamanistic energy. Guidance is built from the rituals, skills of protecting both the teller and the audience, knowledge of the ethical viewpoints, ensuring diversity in tellers, ways of choosing the next teller and conveying the sense of control to the audience. These are not hierarchical to each other but rather overlapping and intertwined together[7].

In the PT performances at both the organizations, the importance of the Narrative reticulation was reinforced. With people having differing, strong opinions it was especially important to build up the atmosphere that encouraged all voices to come out.Also seen was how the guidance part of Narrative reticulation helped people open up. In the first organization, it was not initially easy for the audience to speak freely considering the hierarchical set up. But as part of guidance when diversity in choosing the tellers was displayed, they were able to share.Guidance also helped in the second organization for people to open up about situations where they could not be an ally.This opening up, through guidance, was when deeper reflections and transformation could happen (this was what the audience members also mentioned post the session)

As a Playback Theatre team, for us, these performances further stressed the importance of being very mindful of setting the space for all the voices to come out. The discussions and reflections gained depth when differing perspectives could be heard.Due to the Corona situation, in the second organization many of the audience members joined remotely for the session and yet through PT, all of them could open up, reflect and participant effectively too. The experiential nature of the format and spontaneity it lent worked equally effectively for those who were connected through online means.

There was an acknowledgement, by several members of the audience in both the performances, about how it was a deeper experience for them to explore the subject of D&I through this experiential tool. They had been part of other modes – talks, seminars, presentations – that addressed the subject. However, many of them observed that reflecting by watching the real-life experiences (theirs and others) being enacted reinforced certain things stronger while also giving a human touch to perspectives different from theirs.

We realize that there is more to be done in the area of Diversity & Inclusion especially when it comes to corporate spaces; bringing in more voices, building empathy and more. PT, with its core in personal stories lends itself well to bring out these.

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*First Drop Theatre is a Bangalore (India) based company which works towards bringing Applied Theatre to Corporate spaces, Healthcare organizations and Educational institutions. www.firstdroptheatre.com

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/OPJ8ac9OR5U

An Art of "Criminal Tribes": a Case Study of Budhan Theatre

Dakxin Bajarange

dakxinchhara@gmail.com

India has been always country of crisis. Applied theatre is an extremely important art to express people anguish that leads to solve the problems. Well, right now there is farmers' protest going on and day-by-day problems of socio political issues are increasing. Inflation and unemployment are all time high, people are becoming victims of fake news, politically motivated media is at its peak to destabilize the society by spreading propaganda, rape cases are increasing, numbers of farmer suicides are increasing, fuel charges at all time high, in coming days people might face huge challenges to prove their citizenships due to CAA, NRC laws are issues country and its people are facing so in a time like this people have to raise their voices andprecisely during this time applied theatre becomes extremely important art form to perform people's problems and its anguish.

As an applied theatre practitioner, Istronglybelieve that applied theatre is needed in every corner of country so that public issues can be expressed. Reasons? In theatre, the most important thing is when the audience relates themselves with the performance, when they relate their catharsis with performance, when they see issues they are facing in the performance, it become emotional bridge between actor and spectator. Such mute interaction between actor and spectator express out their catharsis and psychologically performance becomes medium of expression of masses expression. Many people can't talk openly about their issues and can't perform; at that moment applied theatre is much needed to express public issues fearlessly at public spaces in order to reduce the violence in the society.

I'm going to share about criminal tribes and their art but first I would like to say I too belong from this community. I'll start from contemporary time and about some history. I'll share my practical and personal experiences of the theatres I did. Few years are very important in our journey. I'll start from 2018 then I'll talk about 1871 then 1947 and then 1952 and about 1998. These are very important milestones in BudhanTheater's journey and history. Then I'll talk about 2004, 2008, 2017 and again will be back to 2018. I'll finish my talk after coming to 2020. This is the chronology of my talk. So first of all I'll talk about 2018. 26 july 2018, almost 1:30 at night, almost 300-400 police came where I live. The

place I live is called Chharanagara where most of Chhara tribe lives in Ahmedabad. Police did mass assault and they beat around 300-400 people. They broke windows and doors and beat even children and women, even the people who were asleep they beat them too. People who are on road doing nothing they beat them as well. They smashed everyone's vehicles too even if it's four-wheeler or two wheelers. The community with the historical stigma of thieves but now educated people also lives there but it doesn't matters for police and they beat every single person of the community. When this kind of incident happens the question rise why does police do this with everyone? After almost 3 hours mass assault, 29 people were randomly arrested from their homes and send for the police custody and file robbery case against them. After 8 days of judicial jail, all 29 people got bail. What's the reason behind all these? Why such brutal police mass assault happened on particular poor community? Answers lies into history, let's go into it.

In 1871, the British enacted The Criminal Tribe Act. British primarily came to India to collect taxes but India's nomadic tribes who used to travel/live in the forests, mountains, deserts etc were not under their tax net. The British who were coming from the sedentary society could not understand the Nomadic civilization and their way of life. For them people who are on constant move are suspicious. In addition, in 1857's great revolt many nomadic tribes helped to revolutionaries to organize the revolt countrywide and provide them information and ammunitions.

Because of these reasons, nomadic tribes were always on target by the British administration. Also they wanted cheap labors to build big infrastructures in India and that's why they constructed the criminal tribes act and they declared more than 200 tribes as "Born Criminals". Under this act they constructed settlements (Rabbit proof fenced open areas) and kept so called criminal tribes members into it. People weren't allowed to go outside, they had to ask for permission from Superintendent of settlement. It was more like India's concentration camps. The people who were nomadic in nature, used to roam, perform, singing, dancing, carrying different kind of arts with them locked up into the confined settlements across the country.

In 1947 when our country got freedom independent government released most of the people from the prison. But communities who were branded, as Criminal Tribes did not get freedom from the rabbit proof fenced settlements. Independent Indian government set a committee to recommend whether the criminal tribes should be repealed or not. The committee took 5 years and 16 days and finally on 31st Aug 1952 they come to the conclusion that The Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) is the blot on the constitution of India and it should be repeal with immediate effect and it should be replace by "Habitual Offender Act" (HOA). There are so many similarities between the Criminal Tribes Act and the Habitual Offender Act…so in other words, CTA was never repealed in a complete manner and its shadow act is still applicable in Indian states and those tribes who were branded as "Born Criminals" in the British India are still facing historical stigma in free India. In free India, these tribes become know as "De-notified Tribes" (DNTs). Arrests, legal hassles, illegal detentions, atrocities are part of DNTs.

I belong to one of these unfortunate stigmatized tribes *Chhara* tribe that is a victim of pre and post colonization in India.

After independence there was lots of chaos due to partition, independent government framed the rehabilitation policies for refugees from Pakistan but unfortunately they forgot the people who were incarcerated for many years for no crime and after repealing the Criminal Tribes Act, government did not frame any rehabilitation policy for DNTs. Instead they framed different laws that empower police to interrogate them and arrest them. In the absence of any welfare or rehabilitation policies, our forefather again begin nomadic life and when they could not earn livelihood because of stigma, they started petty crimes like stealing, brewing liquor etc. and they again became scapegoat of the police.

Stealing is an art, its involve distracting techniques through live performance; my forefathers were expert in it. For the state and the society, it was crime but for certain communities it became livelihood because state and society did not leave any livelihood option for them. As per modus operandi of Chharas, our people form the team likes we do in Theatre; they do proper rakki of the person and plan where stealing should be conducted. Similarly people do rehearsals in Theatre. There is performance involved into stealing for distracting the person and in theatre also we use different techniques to get attention of people towards our performance. We inherited this art in our genes, we have been using this art form for social change and constitutional guarantee for DNTs.

In 1998, PadmashreeDr Ganesh Devi and Magsaysay awardee Smt. Mahasveta Devi visited the place I live. They have plans to work for DNTs and they wanted that Chharas should lead the movement. They set up a community library where a newsletter called "Budhan" arrived. In that newsletter I read an extremely brutal incident took place in eastern part of India. A person name "BudhanSabar" was brutally beaten up in the police custody and then killed in the judicial jail in the month of Feb 1998. There was an interim judgment given by Justice Roma Pal in Kolkatta High court in the BudhanSabar killing case.Budhan was brutally beaten up to confess thieving that he did not conduct. Police was forcing him because he belonged to "Sabar" tribe and Sabars are DNT, ex-criminal tribe. This was routine practice that when pending cases are piled up in the police station, police randomly arrest person from DNT community and charges him/her under those pending cases. Budhan was victim of the same process. After reading the judgment, I was told by Dr. Devi whether I can make a play on this incident and I immediately took that responsibility. I formed the team of actors from the community and we performed its first performance on the first convention of DNTs on 31st Aug 1998. Unknowingly, we were using our genetics art form that was used for thieving by our forefathers. Budhan play was very powerful, depicting reality of DNTin India. The real process of de-colonization started on very first performance of the play Budhan and then that journey started the use of theatre for social and political change for DNTs.

It is now 22 year, we did 52 productions, I think more then 1000 shows and after every show we speak on chorus "Are we second class, Citizens?" Over the year, Budhan Theatre became voice of

voiceless, cultural expression of DNTs, expressed lots of issues been facing by DNTs and trying to become cultural bridge between isolated communities and system and the society. We trained more then 300 youth for using Theatre art for community development and voice out community issues. Over the year, Budhan Theatre became the most active community theatre of the country by using street theatre art for community development. When Dr. Devi told me to make the play on BudhanSabar case along with that Dr. Devi also set up a community library in the Chhara community. Community youth first time introduced to various kind of literature, that gave them lots of thoughts to fight to remove the stigma. Community library became creative space for gathering and rehearsals. Parents who were involving in petty crimes their children got new hope in the library and theatre for the better future. Literary and creative activity diverted their energy from crime to creative arts and slowly they begin to be community leaders to solve community problems. They become pressure group of the community. If any wrong doings happen with DNTs across the country, this theatre group was always ready to perform those issues, medias covered creative expression widely and in that way voices from dark lanes becomes more visible in the state and sometime in the country. Visibility of the problem in the media led to solve the problem also. For example, when former Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh formed India's first national commission, in that meeting Budhan Theatre's cultural revolution was also discussed and Dr. Singh said that he is aware about Budhan Theatre and its work. After few days, India's first National Commission for DNTs was announced and first time in India a serious study was conducted for the welfare and complete rehabilitation for 60 million people in India.

Let me share a success story of our housing rights struggle for the DNT communities. In 2004, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) demolished DNTs huts by branding them encroaches. There were 212 families of Dabger and Rajbhoi nomadic tribes. Budhan Theatre decided to fight for housing rights for our poorer among poor DNT people. We made the play titled "Bulldozer", performed across the city, performed in front of AMC's commissioner's house, on the street of Ahmedabad and mobilized thousands of people around the issue, had discussion with advocated who can help us to fight legal battle for housing rights in the court. Fortunately, sensitization thought theatre worked very well and we got help from lawyers in Gujarat High Court. We also made a short film on the struggle of victims of demolitionso wherever our theatre could not reach there our film can reach and speak behalf of victims. In 2007, the film "Bulldozer" was also screened in United Nation in New York and had discussion about DNT's plight there. UN took serious note on this and they mentioned DNTs issue into 2008's yearly magazine published by UN.

Budhan Theatre fought the case for the housing rights of 212 families in Gujarat High Court. We won the case over there. AMC challenged Gujarat High Court's judgment into Supreme Court of India. We also fought over there with the help of advocates and in 2012 we won the case in Supreme Court of India as well. The Court ordered to AMC to give housings before demolition of DNT's ghetto. Finally, in 2017, before the state election, AMC implemented the Supreme Court's order and all 212 families

got concrete constructed apartments in a nearby area where they used to live on streets.

Today these 212 families of Dabgar and Rajbhoinomadic tribes are properly settled and Budhan Theatre is also helping them to revive their traditional livelihood so they can also live the life with dignity, guaranteed by the constitution of India.

To conclude, in my 22 years applied theatre practice, I found that there is an important link between expression and non-violence. When we perform people's issues, they relate with their person stories, they connect with actor emotionally and intellectually, while watching the performance they interact with self, within…some time they clap, cheers, whistles or silently watch the performance but during the performance there is quite communication between actor and spectator happens. This helps both actor and spectator to bring out their anguish, anger and make them empty where he/she can feel more hopes, positive energy. This entire creative process help to reduce violence in the society. In addition, by the performance, an actor develops leadership qualities by creatively communicating with masses. These creative leaders can be good sensible citizen who are experienced in performing others and educate themselves about the problems of different strata of the society.

Theatre has immense power to reduce violence in the society and can lead to avail people's rights.

Budhan Theatre knows that journey of long struggle has just started; there is a long road ahead to avail constitutional guarantee for DNTs that was completely missed out after independence.

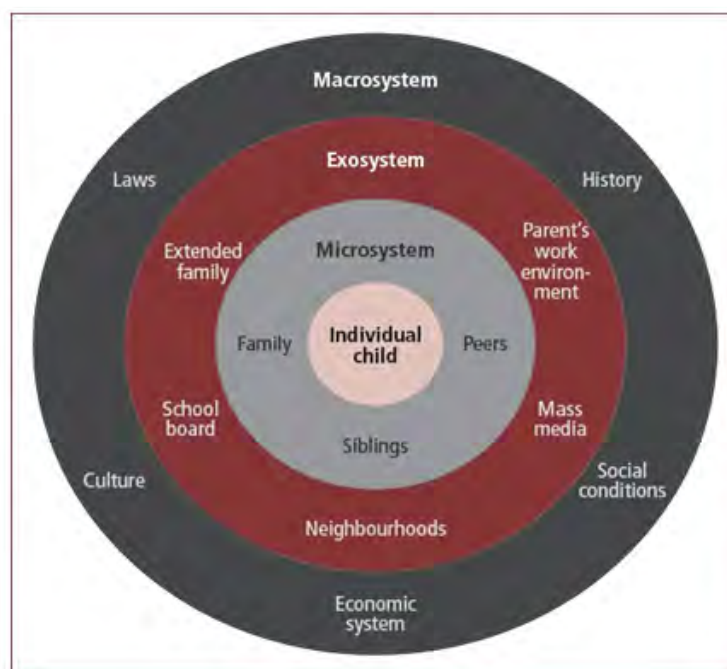Budhan Theatre believe in "Theatre everywhere, forever".

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/lLagpWTOCs8

National Education Policy of India : Its Implications on Applied Theatre Practices and Practitioners

Abhishek Goswami

abhitiedie@gmail.com

Before coming to my presentation,first, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Applied theatre India foundation, Pune and Indian council for cultural relations Delhi for selecting my paper for this first international webinar on applied theatre organized by ATIF. At this moment, I would also like to thank Azim Premji foundation because without working in the same for teacher professional development it was not possible for me to broaden my vision tolook deep into the practices of theatre and drama in education in entirety of the ecosystem of child's formal education. When I say entirety of the ecosystem of child's formal education – I mean about the reciprocal relationship between the child and socio-cultural, economic and political environment in which a child is born, socialized and be educated. This entirety of the ecosystem of child's formal education can be understood best through the diagram of Bronfenbrenner's model of child development as below.

Though I think that the topic of my paper –'National education policy of India and its implications on applied theatre practices and practitioners'is quite straight forward and self-explanatory.But in order to share my understanding on the issue of paper, I would like to share it into three parts which are as follow :

- Explanation of my understanding on the key questions/terms relevant for the issue.

- Salient features of the national education policy 2020 which are the most relevant for applied theatre practices and practitioners.

- Inference – implications of the NEP 2020 on applied theatre practices and practitioners in terms of the major scope and challenges.

So, I begin my paper with a little necessary explanation of my conceptual understanding on some basic questions or the key terms to be used by me in the paper as follow :

What is education?

Education is the simple process of learning and knowing. It is not restricted to the schools only. Education starts from the mother's lap. Parents and family inculcate good manners and make responsible citizens out of their children. Home is called first school of the children, but the formal education starts from the school, where they are taught, how to behave and understand what is going on around them.

Education is very important for every human being. It makes one able to understand what is happening around us logically and clearly. An educated person can take practical decisions and make right moves at the right time. Human existence without education is justlike fecund land. Education not only enables individuals to put their potential to best use and do something productive in the upcoming future, but also plays a main role in shaping an individual to be a better, responsible citizen and an active member of the society. An educated personwith self-confidence and precise moves knows how to transform the world. Education providesthe ladder for achieving success in life and enables us to utilize skills and caliber in a constructive way. Therefore, it's the prime responsibility of an individual to get educated andlive a prosperous life while being a responsible citizen.

What is national education policy?

When I use the word policy, I mean about the broader framework of the vision and suggestive action plan about something to achieve at collective level. The said framework can express and comprise of

the Philosophical ideas, social imagination and aspiration, realization of necessities, evaluation of capacities, values to be adhered, guiding principles and suggestive plan of action with indicative timelines before the implementation of any task to be accomplished at wider level in future.

National education policy is hence referring to the principles and government policymaking in educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems. Education occurs in many forms for many purposes through many institutions. Examples include early childhood education, kindergarten through to 12th grade, two- and four-year colleges or universities, graduate and professional education, adult education and job training. Therefore, education policy can directly affect the education people engage in at all ages.

What is Education System?

The system of education includes all institutions that are involved in delivering formal education (public and private, for-profit and nonprofit, onsite or virtual instruction) and their faculties, students, physical infrastructure, resources and rules. In a broader definition the system also includes the institutions that are directly involved in financing, managing, operating or regulating such institutions (like government ministries and regulatory bodies, central testing organizations, textbook boards and accreditation boards). The rules and regulations that guide the individual and institutional interactions within the set up are also part of the education system.

What is applied theatre and drama?

Practiced around the world, *Applied Theatre* is a general term describing the use of drama in participatory ways and often in non-traditional settings to address social issues. It can be described as the use of theatre as a *tool* rather than simply as *entertainment*. (Mandala centre for change)

In the academia of the theatre, applied theatre is generally accepted as an umbrella term, embracing a wide range of theatre practices that share an intentionality to provoke or shape social change, including: theatre in education, theatre for development, youth theatre, disability theatre, museum theatre, reminiscence theatre and prison theatre.

Who is an applied theatre practitioner?

Going by the Freirean and boalian framework of the pedagogy and the theatre of the oppressed, for me an applied theatre practitioner is the person of society who facilitate the aesthetic and 'embodied' dialogue between society and social situations by using theatre as a dialogical space for exploring

what to do when confronting a certain problem. The applied theatre practitioner applies a 'maieutic' attitude, a Socratic mode of inquiry, which aims to bring a person's latent ideas into clear consciousness. In the whole framework, an applied theatre practitioner is not 'pregnant' with the 'solution' to the problem of the community but for him or her the community is pregnant with the responses to its own problems. He or she is just there to help the community or individuals give birth to such responses through dramatic enquiry.

After a necessary explanation of the key terms now I expect to draw the attention of the readers on salient features of national education policy of India 2020 which will be relevant for us to reach at common shared understanding on the implications of NEP 2020 on applied theatre practices and the practitioners. So here are some key features of NEP 2020.

National education policy 2020

The Vision :

This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy envisages that the curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The vision of the Policy is to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

The guiding principles

The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution. A good education institution is one in which every student feels welcomed and cared for, where a safe and stimulating learning environment exists, where a wide range of learning experiences are offered, and where good physical infrastructure and appropriate resources conducive to learning are available to all students. Attaining these qualities must be the goal of every educational institution. However, at the same time, there must also be seamless integration and coordination across institutions and across all stages of education. The fundamental

principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it are :

➢ Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.

➢ According the highest priority to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy by all students by Grade 3.

➢ Flexibility, so that learners can choose their learning trajectories and programmes, and thereby choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests.

➢ No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning.

➢ Multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge.

➢ Emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams.

➢ Creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation.

➢ Ethics and human & Constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice.

➢ Promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning; life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience.

➢ Focus on regular formative assessment for learning rather than the summative assessment that encourages today's 'coaching culture.

➢ Extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access for Divyang students, and educational planning and management.

➢ Respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject.

➢ Full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students can thrive in the education system.

➢ Synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education.

> Teachers and faculty as the heart of the learning process – their recruitment, continuous professional development, positive working environments and service conditions.

> A 'light but tight' regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency of the educational system through audit and public disclosure while encouraging innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment.

> Outstanding research as a corequisite for outstanding education and development.

> Continuous review of progress based on sustained research and regular assessment by educational experts.

> A rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions.

> Education is a public service; access to quality education must be considered a basic right of every child.

> Substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation.

> Reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking.

Holistic development of learners

4.4. The key overall thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reform across all stages will be to move the education system towards real understanding and towards learning how to learn - and away from the culture of rote learning as is largely present today. The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills. Ultimately, knowledge is a deep-seated treasure and education helps in its manifestation as the perfection which is already within an individual. All aspects of curriculum and pedagogy will be reoriented and revamped to attain these critical goals. Specific sets of skills and values across domains will be identified for integration and incorporation at each stage of learning, from pre-school to higher education. Curriculum frameworks and transaction mechanisms will be developed for ensuring that these skills and values are imbibed through engaging processes of teaching and learning. NCERT will identify these required skill sets and include mechanisms for their transaction in the National Curriculum Framework for early childhood and school education

Experiential learning

4.6. In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. To close the gap in achievement of learning outcomes, classroom transactions will shift, towards competency-based learning and education. The assessment tools (including assessment "as", "of", and "for" learning) will also be aligned with the learning outcomes, capabilities, and dispositions as specified for each subject of a given class.

4.7. Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.

Implications of NEP 2020 of India on applied theatre practices and practitioners

Based on my previous experience of working as theatre and drama in education practitioner for children earlier and now as curriculum developer and facilitator for teacher's professional development programs of various kind in the domain of drama in education, here I am trying to make an attempt to put certain intuitive ideas about the forthcoming scope and challenges for applied theatre practices and practitioners in India. There may be several types of practices of applied theatre for education, but I would like to limit myself to the practices of theatre and drama in education as listed below:

➢ **Theatre for children**

- Theatre in education
- Theatre for young audiences

➢ **Drama in education**

- Process drama
- Creative drama
- Integrated approach of drama in class room

If we carefully look at the vision, guiding principles and recommendations about the specific educational processes in NEP (Experiential learning aimed at holistic development of the children) we can clearly infer that we as a aspirant of a democratic society in true sense need the future

citizenry as good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. And we know, which can't be achieved without the inclusion of arts in general and the theatre and drama specifically in entire educational processes.

Scopes ahead

As we know there are many theories of education and theatre exists which claims that quality in the education of the children is very much dependent upon the classroom transactions designed and executed by the teacher in the class room constructively, dialogically and humanely and on the several cultural inputs received by the children outside the classroom in whole school environment which are in alignment of the broader aims of education.

Going by this claim considering the

- Vision, guiding principles and recommendations about the specific educational processes in NEP (Experiential learning aimed at holistic development of the children) and

- Recommendations made in NCF 2005 and NCTE 2009 about the inclusion of drama for the education of children and teachers.

we as the member of community of applied theatre practitioners should be very happy to infer that it has very much significant implications on the position of theatre and drama in education. Theatre in education, theatre for young audience and drama as constructive and critical pedagogical tool have an immense potential to transform the existing didactic approach of education into a constructive one. Which in turn can substantially contribute to develop future citizenry as desired in the national education policy 2020.

Challenges ahead

Our previous experience says that any policy cannot be successful in a country without collective social and cultural aspirations and the Political will for qualitative implementation at desired scale.Though the social and cultural aspiration and the political will are the factors which can not be controlled by the community of applied theatre practitioners but if we assume that everything at this front goes at right direction then too so the readiness of the applied theatre community itself is a challenge. These challenges can be seen at two major level one is the quality and the second is quantity.As per the intentions reflected in NEP 2020 in order to qualitative deliverance this country needs the teacher, teacher educators, counsellors and actor-teacher or pedagogue who have the

knowledge and skills in depth and breadth of the areas as follow :

- Nature of human being

- Human being and society

- Theories of social change

- Constitutional morality and constitutional values

- Educational philosophy

- Psychology of learning

- Nature of knowledge – different forms of understanding and process of knowledge construction in the same

- Curriculum and pedagogy

- National education policy

- National curriculum framework

- Curriculum framework, curriculum, syllabus and text book's relationship

- Principles of curriculum development

- Nature and functions of applied theatre and dramatic arts in education

The list we saw is an exemplary, another challenge is the scale. As per the secondary data this country has around 15 lakh schools which are functional and as per the desire of NEP each secondary level school needs 3 teachers of arts ideally. Similarly, the no. of teacher education institutes in India is around 30000 which needs 1 teacher educator in the domain of drama and theatre in education. How this scale will be achieved? Is a very practical and common sensical question. I hope emergence of the numerous institutions like Applied theatre India foundation will set a benchmark towards the same.

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/0w-eQlCPsuc

Rethinking Community in India : An Exploration of Applied Theatre Practice in the Online Space during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Srividya Srinivas

srividya.srinivas88@gmail.com

Introduction :

Human beings are social beings; we work and think together. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us into isolation, compelling us to rethink belonging and what community means to us. The Cambridge dictionary defines community as "a group of people who are considered as a unit because of their shared interests or background" (COMMUNITY | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary , no date) . A community of people, therefore come together to share a common interest and find a sense of belonging. However, according to Peter Block, a consultant and speaker in the area of community building, "our communities are separated into silos; they are a collection of institutions and programs operating near one another but not overlapping or touching" (Block, 2018: p22) . Therefore, our sense of belonging is in itself so fragmented, we are constantly searching for a sense of belonging in all aspects of our lives. American educator, Carol Lee Flinders defines a culture of belonging, in bell hooks' Belonging : A Culture of Place as :

> One in which there is "intimate connection with the land to which one belongs….
>
> expressiveness, generosity, egalitarianism, mutuality, affinity for alternative modes of
>
> knowing, playfulness, inclusiveness, nonviolent conflict resolution, and openness to spirit.
>
> (hooks, 2009: p13)

While Flinders talks of having a connection with land, she also speaks of mutuality, balance, expressiveness, egalitarianism, inclusiveness and openness to spirit. These are as important to feel a sense of belonging as comfort and connection. A sense of belonging and being a part of a community fosters growth and a greater understanding of the self.

India being a country of over 1.35 billion people (India Population (2020) - Worldometer , no date) , 28 states, 9 union territories, 22 scheduled languages, different faiths, religion, and castes; our concept

of community can be quite complex. Communities are formed based on religion, caste, language and geography. Due to the large diaspora of people within the country, these communities are quite diverse. The pre-Covid era defined communities mostly based on geography and accessibility to the same.

For the past decade now, we have existed in communities both in the online and the offline space. However, this Covid era has pushed the boundaries of our understanding of community, thus creating a shift in our experience of belonging, that is more symbolic than physical or geographical. As British anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen says, "community exists in the mind of its members" (Cohen, 2013: p98) . With this pandemic, now, more than ever, we have a deeper craving to find belonging. As Julie Welles, digital and social media expert comments in her blog :

> The pandemic has leveled the playing field. We are all facing the anxiety, fear and
>
> uncertainty together. The more we are physically apart, the more we crave to connect
>
> with our communities. (Welles, 2020)

The internet has always given us greater reach. For the first time, we are able to build global communities, make connections across the world and feel a sense of belonging with people we have never met in person. Physical borders and distance are no longer limitations to belonging to a community.

Through this paper, I will be re-examining the idea of community - during the Covid-19 pandemic in India, through the lens of Aakaara : The Applied Theatre Company's online drama club, Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . Here we run online applied theatre workshops for children between the ages of 8 and 13 years. We explore themes and issues pertinent to them and what it means to grow up in the world today.

Context :

Before I begin my investigation into how we see community and belonging in this Covid era through our online workshops, it is crucial for me to set the context of my research. That is, looking at how children are experiencing and dealing with the pandemic in Urban India. According to a journal article on Covid-19 and its impact on children in India :

> [This pandemic has] disrupted nearly every aspect of children's lives – their health,
>
> development, learning, behaviour and their families' economic security, including
>
> protection from violence and abuse. (Kumar, Nayar and Bhat, 2020)

Children and young people, regardless of where in the world they live, are constantly trying to get a better understanding of who they are and trying to belong; to be a part of a tribe. One such place they find that sense of being a part of a community is their school. Due to the pandemic, schools in India shut on the 13th of March 2020. Children have been at home since, unable to meet their friends and feeling a sense of loneliness, not being able to go to school and learn with their peers. According to an NDTV article, "children don't have a fixed schedule; they have their parents around them, all the time" (Ahuja, 2020) . Moreover, much of their fear comes from the adults they observe around them, adding to it, for many, a sense of uncertainty, loneliness and even loss. With all this, children are becoming more vulnerable to mental health issues. With no easy access to support, apart from their immediate families, they see their communities breaking down around them. Communities they used to be a part of, such as their after school classes, their peer groups in school, or their tuition classes, no longer exist offline. With this breakdown of community, they are turning more to the online space, spending increasing amounts of time on social media and craving online entertainment. According to an Economic Times article, dated June 2020, "54% of parents state their kids are spending upto 5 additional hours on average online in front of a screen" (Verma, 2020) , finding new spaces to gain a sense of belonging and community. On the other hand, there is a population of children who do not have access to good internet connections for online schooling; creating a bigger gap between the privileged and underprivileged. For most children from the under-served communities, their schools were their safe space. This is where they were assured their daily mid-day meals, which may not be assured at home, thus shattering their space of community and belonging. While this is definitely a growing concern, it will not be the focus of this paper.

According to post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, "All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (Social Constructivism | GSI Teaching & Resource Center , no date) . Therefore, according to his constructivist theory, learning, growth and higher-level thinking are most effective when done collaboratively, rather than in isolation. Thus, children and young people being resilient in nature, continue to rebuild and create communities during the pandemic, as collaboration and play come naturally to them.

Building communities of hope through applied theatre :

According to Helen Nicholson, "applied theatre is primarily concerned with developing new possibilities for everyday living" (Nicholson, 2014: p4) . This is more important now than ever when we are faced with a pandemic, where, according to Mark K Smith, editor of education and community building blog, infed.org, "some children and young people feel that they have nothing to live for" (Smith, 2020) . The pandemic has brought with it a sense of grief, loss and uncertainty, thus contributing to a loss of hope and increased vulnerability, especially for children and young people. In such circumstances, it is a basic human need to connect and belong and grieve as a community.

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Likewise, it was essential to re-establish human connections at a time we were all in isolation due to the pandemic. It is in this endeavour, we started our first online drama and storytelling workshops in an attempt to connect with children and young people. We then continued to experiment with tactile work, such as making puppets and masks, in the online space, as a way to better understand our participants, while having fun. As we continued to offer workshops, a sizable number of participants continued to come back. According to a participant, this was a space that allowed them to forget the realities of the pandemic, thus giving them a sense of hope. This reiterated our belief that children needed a safe space to connect with one another in the wake of the pandemic.

In the context of how viewers responded to the 9/11 tragedy, feminist and social activist bell hooks talks of how "grief created a context of vulnerability and rage where folks were eager to simplify everything to make a common enemy" (hooks, 2003: p12) . This is relevant to our experience during the pandemic. During our first set of workshops for Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, we were exploring the emotions our young participants were experiencing during this lockdown. We realised there were a lot of extreme emotions such as rage, frustration and increased boredom. During one of the sessions, our participants could hot-seat the coronavirus and ask questions. What we saw was our participants becoming aggressive towards the common enemy; the coronavirus, threatening to radiate and burn them alive. Then we had a moment of transformation and synchronisation of thought. They collectively agreed that the coronavirus is here to stay and teach us a lesson in living life in harmony with nature. Thus, it was important to sign a peace agreement with the coronavirus, wherein, so long as our participants do not bring harm to the environment, themselves and the people around them, the coronavirus will not affect them. This moment of realisation and transformation brought the participants together. It made them acknowledge they were not alone. This brought our participants and us facilitators together, knowing we were all sharing the same thoughts and fears.

According to vulnerability researcher, Brene Brown, our tolerance towards vulnerability is reducing, and this vulnerability "is at the core of fear, anxiety and shame and very difficult emotions we all experience" (Brown, 2010) . This pandemic has brought on an increase in fear and anxiety, thus making people more emotionally vulnerable. As mentioned earlier, it is also bringing us closer to one another, creating what I like to call a community of hope . hooks (2003: p xiv) talks of hope being something that comes from a space of struggle. One where personal and social transformation is possible. Philosopher Ernest Bloch talks of the not yet , or in other words, a feeling of possibilities (Giroux, 2004: p38) . It is this hope that brings the community of our participants together and keeps them coming back month after month, in spite of workshops being online; a space they already feel overwhelmed by due to online school. One participant, during a workshop session, told us, our workshop was like a 2nd home. Others say that they miss our workshops when we take a break. Our workshops thus give our participants a positive constant in their lives; a place of possibilities; a sense of hope and understanding that everyone is in this together.

Over the past 5 months of running Mirror, Mirror on the Wall we have seen our participants really learning to support one another. During one month, when exploring community and belonging, they created their own town, paying close attention to everything that they needed to function as a community. Day 1 of this process resulted in them having a heated argument about how roads ruin the aesthetics of the town, versus how roads are essential to go from one place to another. After taking the week to calm down they thought about what was important to them and for their town. When they came back the next week, we saw that they started working together and felt a better sense of belonging to the town they created. This experience saw the beginnings of our participants navigating their way through working together collaboratively and thus, creating their own community of hope within our space.

I believe what we have created through our online drama club, is what Smith (2020) calls a sanctuary . He defines it as "spaces away from the pressures of daily life where children and young people are able to breathe and be themselves" (Smith, 2020) . A refuge, or a place of safety. When they have been seeing constant change around them, our virtual workshop space has become a constant in their lives. This space is available to them when they need it. This space allows for vulnerability without judgement, allowing each individual to feel wanted and connected. Over the past months of working together, some who have never even met offline have created meaningful relationships and support each other both online in the workshop space, and outside the workshop space.

> One of the dangers we face in our educational systems is the loss of a feeling of
>
> community, not just the loss of closeness among those with whom we work and with our
>
> students, but also the loss of a feeling of connection and closeness with the world beyond
>
> the academy. (hooks, 2003: p xv)

While the stress of online schooling continues to increase, students feel a sense of disconnect. Especially with everything happening in small 4x3 boxes. They are no longer able to engage in hushed conversations with their friends as the teacher teaches, or convince the teacher to give them a free period so they can go to the field and play. This has led to a sense of dystopia. Aakaara's virtual workshop offers a community of hope, in which our participants have something to look forward to and start to believe that they can move ahead, despite the pandemic. Through dialogue and play, we encourage our participants to engage, act and reflect on the various materials and provocations we bring into the space and find ways of collaboratively seeking answers. The co-intentionality of our work ensures participants have equal ownership or stake over our collaborative explorations. Moreover, each question or theme we bring into the space comes from our discussions with them and what they feel is important to them. This shared ownership of the direction in which our online drama club takes contributes to their sense of belonging and to being the torchbearers of this community.

Exploitation of Community :

While we continue to build and create new forms of community in order to deal with this pandemic, it is important to be mindful of the inherent abuse that may exist within these online communities. As Rachel Harry says in her TED talk about how theatre education can save the world:

> Over the course of the development of the human being, there evolves a desire to fit in.
>
> To belong. And this desire is so strong, we are willing to subjugate our own feelings, our
>
> own needs, our own thoughts. So we can conform. (Harry, 2017)

This need to belong and connect can manifest negatively in the form of exploiting the sense of community that has been created. Being in the online space gives young people an anonymity they lacked in the physical space, thus giving them the courage to offend their peers and facilitators without thinking about consequences. This, unfortunately, leads to a breakdown of the community, due to lack of trust, care and hope. While we have been seeing an increase in online vandalism due to social media, this new form of being together has seen children zoombombing classes. Poojan Sahil at Youth Ki Awaaz, an online youth platform that addresses social issues, defines zoombombing as, " people who are not supposed to be a part of a class or meeting, but enter it to cause disruptions" (Sahil, 2020) . This creates immense anxiety in teachers about the safety of the online space. Children also find creative ways to slack on their work online. It has become so easy to switch their videos off or pretend to have an unstable internet connection. This, in my opinion, is a cry for attention. Sadly with parents working from home, there is no longer a distinction between home and work. This means children are no longer getting the same attention they may have received pre-Covid. Unfortunately, they are also unable to go out and play with their friends. Therefore, this lack of connection makes them crave individual attention. In an online classroom setting, where the teacher is already struggling to give their individualised attention to every child, as they could in the physical classroom, makes the child act out, by way of calling for this attention.

This makes it all the more important that we find ways to sustain and nurture these communities of hope. Spaces where children are able to play and be themselves while working towards understanding themselves and the world around them better. Thus creating personal and social change.

Conclusion :

These communities of hope, therefore, provide children and young people a sanctuary where they can be themselves and through play, gain a better understanding of how they can navigate this pandemic. Thus empowering them to make healthy choices and giving them a space to make healthy connections.

So how can one ensure such communities of hope continue to sustain and be nurtured? Mirror, Mirror on the Wall will continue to function in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it becomes crucial that we as facilitators are mindful of the struggles and questions our participants come with, as well as the risks that come, working with children and young people in the virtual space. It becomes imperative that we are able to effectively create a container for our participants, ensuring they feel supported.

In order to sustain a community such as this, it is important to partner with key stakeholders, such as parents or immediate caregivers. Thus putting onus on parents to help sustain and nurture this community, especially while our work is limited to the screen. We ensure that every decision involving the child and classes are taken after consultation with the parents. There have been sessions where the work we have done has pushed our participants into spaces of discomfort - after all, it is in such places that transformations happen. It then becomes our responsibility to apprise parents about the situation and ensure they facilitate a healthy dialogue at home to support our work. This has definitely made a difference in the way both parents and children have responded. There is faith and trust, which only further helps in nurturing and growing our community.

Who better to help nurture and sustain our community, than our participants, another key stakeholder. It is therefore imperative to put the onus on them to help grow this community. To do this, we ensure our participants feel their voices are heard, by taking inspirations from our conversations with them to give shape to our workshops. For example, during a discussion around gender stereotyping, a male participant felt that most discussions around gender were highly female-centric and wanted to know why voices of men were not heard. This then motivated us to find a story that explored gender from a male perspective. This is one way in which we ensure our participants are constantly engaged and always feel validated.

To conclude, it is our responsibility as applied theatre facilitators to nurture and grow this community and ensure our participants actively engage and help us sustain this community. For this, we must continue to ensure our work with children remains co-intentional, thus ensuring both facilitators and participants have a shared agency to take the workshops in the direction that is most beneficial to all the participants.

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Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/XmSQHQKRUBc

Goshtarang : Applying Theatre to Address the Problems in Early Literacy of Tribal Children

Vaibhav Lokur

vaibhav.lokur@quest.org.in

Genesis :

Founded in 2007, Quality Education Support Trust (QUEST) is an organisation that is deeply engaged in addressing the issue of Early Literacy across the state of Maharashtra with a special focus on the tribal belts. Over the past 14 years the organisation has done original work on how children learn to read in Indian regional languages. Geetanjali Kulkarni, analumnus of National School OF Drama is associated with the organisation right from its inception. She was conducting theatre workshops and reading activities for the teachers as well as the children in an ad hock manner. The response was always motivating to take a step further and build upon it. However, it was clear after some initial efforts that, the work needed a sharper specific focus and a goal. This led to the foundation of the **Goshtarang Fellowship Program**.

QUEST's early literacy enhancement programs aim at enhancing the capacities of teachers's so that they can engage children with text meaningfully. One of the prominent insights that QUEST has got from the years of fieldwork is that Libraries prove to be a great support for inculcating the reading habit in children in the absence of literate home environments. But in rural and tribal areas extra efforts are required to attract children to the libraries.

After some discussion with QUEST's team Geetanjali decided to take this challenge of creating sustained interest for reading books among tribal children. She decided to use her deep knowledge of theatre to achieve this complex task. Initially she teamed up with local theatre enthusiasts and designed 7 short performances of 5 to 10 min duration each, based on carefully selected story books. The concept was to introduce the world of printed language to children through these performances. Geetanjali in one of her interviews narrated her experience about how this concept worked.

"Performing a story book builds a friendship with books for children… Once we were performing in an Ashram School, in Palghar district and children were engrossed in the performance. A girl stood up in

the middle of the performance and started watching the performance from the back side of the table. She was mesmerised to see the movement of the puppets. This mere confidence of the girl, and those amazing expressions are a memory to cherish forever. There was a conviction in her gesture, mere curiosity had initiated imagination in her."

(Junoons Mumbai Local with Geetanjali Kulkarni - Complete Interview on You Tube)

Initially restricted to local theatre enthusiasts the fellowship program is now open for emerging qualified theatre professionals across the state. Over these years we have seen the immense potential that theatre can play in helping children learn and enjoy reading. In the following sections of this paper, I would present the readers the nature, process, and the impact of the fellowship program.

The reading crisis :

In rural and tribal areas, most children are first generation school-goers. They rarely see adults around them reading and engaging with print material on a regular basis. It has been our experience that school going children do not have access to any books other than their school text books. Hence, the world of books remains mostly unknown to them. As a result, their command on literacy remains limited. In tribal areas, schoolsare grossly under resourced too. In general, the environment is not conducive for literacy and results in poor achievement levels of children. Often this makes it difficult for children to complete their formal education meaningfully.

Reading is a process of meaning making. The widely accepted Michigan definition (July 11, 2002) of reading defines it as follows

"The process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation."

According to this definition the reader's prior knowledge and the context of the reading situation plays an important role in the process of reading. We have observed that performance based on children's story books embedded in the literacy program can provide immense help to build the prior knowledge of children and provide an appropriate context to their reading.Thus,the Goshtarang fellowship provides an opportunity to explore an interdisciplinary work between children's literature, reading pedagogy & theatre.

The process :

The Goshtarang Fellowship program is a residential, full time program of ten-months. 3 to 5 Young artists interested in theatre are selected for this fellowship through a rigorous selection process conducted by renowned theatre artists and educators. Interest in working with children, having

experience in theatre, knowing fluent Marathi and readiness to live in rural areas with minimum resources are some of the key factors for selection.

The fellowship is divided into two semesterswhere the fellows perform stories and conduct activities for the children of grade 1 to 7. The fellows work on 3 different stories in each semester. As a part of the 'reading and writing enhancement program' the fellowship focuses on performing children's literature using theatre as a medium along with conducting library activities such as Read Aloud sessions, picture talk, story graph, story writing, review & feedback, creating books etc. These activities are tightly integrated with the performance. At the end of the second semester fellows are required to select a piece of children's literature and independently prepare and perform it. This performance is the academic closure of the program. Upon the successful completion of the academic closure, fellows are felicitated by renowned artist from the field of theatre.

The first workshop of 15 days duration focuses on big ideas in children's literature and reading pedagogy. In this workshop the fellows are expected to read and discuss articles about nature of language, literacy instruction, and tribal socio-cultural ethos in which they are supposed to work. Fellows also observe live classrooms of trained teachers to get a first-hand feel of working with children. Reading aloud diverse literature in Marathi is an important component of the workshop that sharpens their own skills and often spills over the entire term. Input on children's literature includes, understanding different genres, criteria for selection of books considering the age group, socio-cultural context of children and the imagery and values depicted in the book. Along with this the fellows get an opportunity to explore a range of techniques and activities to engage children with books.

Towards the end of the workshop, they are supposed to select the stories for performance. Normally, 3 different books are selected for the age groups 6 to 8 years (Grade 1 & 2), 8 to 10 years (Grade 3 & 4), and 10 to 13 years (Grade 5, 6 & 7), under the guidance of the performance director and library educator. The books selected for first two age groups are normally picture books with lesser text, while those selected for the older age group will be typically presenting some social issue or provide an exposure to different cultural context.*(For the details see table below)* The workshop culminates by evolving a 2 to 4 session long plan to engage children with each book. Typically, each session is of 45 to 60 minutes duration. The performance is an integral part of this plan.

a. The illustration from the book, It Takes a Village, written by Jane Cowen Fletcher. Yemi ani Koku going to the market.

b. Suggestive costumes and color theme used for the performance of the story. Costumes by Payal Patil. Actors: Pratiksha Kachare, and Mahendra Waluni. Directed by: Geetanjali Kulkarni.

The rehearsal for the 3 performances is a 30-day process. Physical exercises, voice exercises are part of the routine for the fellows. Fellows read the text aloud many a times to get familiar with the style of the author. They do background reading about the author and the context of the story. For example, for performing the story named 'It takes a village' (Mul Saarya Gaavache), fellows researched about the culture, languages and music of Benin, a country from western Africa. They read about Jane Cowen Fletcher, the author of the story and her inspiration to write this book. After this background work, fellows spend some time in improvisations, they design spatial feel of the performance. Since, the actual space of performance is extreme and flexible, directors have explored various seating arrangements. For example, Director Chinmay Kelkar presented the story 'The Why why girl' (Ka Ka Kumari) in an elongated space where children sat on both sides of performance area facing each other. Geetanjali Kulkarni, while directing 'It takes a village' (Mul Saarya Gavache) chose a circular performance space where spectators would sit on all around.

For performance only suggestive costumes and props are designed to ensure they are easy to carry considering the long travels to reach to the schools located at remote locations. These are inspired from the pictures and colour scheme, of the story book so that they present the similar imagery.
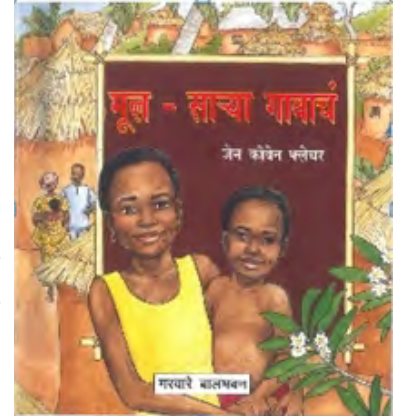
Music is a major component of all the performances, songs and background music is designed and recorded using minimal instruments. Often, the music is created by actors themselves using their body and voice. In short, simplicity and ease of execution are the key elements in designing the performance. Veteran actor Nasiruddin Shah as a chief guest of Valedictory function of 2017-2018, called this as 'back to the basic' approach, where the actors are expected to communicate mainly using body and voice, the fundamental tools of theatre.

One of the challenges for the director is to design the performance by keeping the text in the book intact to the extent possible. Normally for the first two age groups only a little or no alteration is done to the text in the book. For the older age group where there is more text directors have adapted them for performance keeping the style and voice of the author intact. Sometimes when the books are not available in Marathi, translations have been used as a script. For example, Peter H Reynold's book 'the dot' was performed in Marathi but read out to the children in English, as the published translation in Marathi was not available.

Once the performance is ready fellows start working with the children in selected schools. They start implementing the pre decided plan in which performance is a highlight. In the following section I would discuss the process of working with children with an example of a book 'It Takes a Village' (Mul Saarya Gavache).

Working with the children :

Mul Saarya Gaavacha, is a story set in the African continent. Yemi's mother asks her to care for her younger brother Koku during their visit to market, and the girl is delighted at the prospect of taking on a grown-up task and feels proud about the fact that she alone will look after the child. Three of them set out to the village market, Yemi soon loses Kokou, but instead of the terrible things she imagines happening to him, the toddler is lovingly cared for by all the adults he meets. On the other hand, Yemi's mother is not worried at all as she is knows that everyone from her community will take care of the child. Through the story Jane Cowen Fletcher, the illustrator and the writer of this book presents the readers strong community bonds and a sense of faith she found among the communities in countries like Benin. This book is translated in Marathi by Shobha Bhagwat, under the title 'Mul Saarya Gaavacha'.

After selecting this story, fellows worked with the education team of QUEST to plan the activities. The plan emerged as follows :

Activity plan for the story book Mul Saarya Gaavacha **:**

Day 01 :   1.   Introduce the continent of Africa and location of the country of Benin, using a map and discuss about the people, culture of Benin using photographs.

Day 01 :   2.   Introduce Jane Cowen Fletcher, the author and discuss about her life journey and books.

Day 01 :   3.   Introduce and discuss the African saying 'it takes a village to raise a child'

Day 01 :   4.   Show and discuss the cover page of the book and ask children to predict the story. Inform them that they will see the performance based on the book tomorrow.

Day 02 :   1.   Perform the story.

Day 02 :   2.   After the performance conduct discussions around the question, how would story unfold in their own village.

Day 03 :   1.   Read aloud the book showing the wonderful illustrations by Fletcher.

Day 03 :   2.   Ask children to work in groups on the task of creating their own story using the problem that a child is lost in the market.

Day 04 :   1.   Ask children to make a 8 pager book of their story and read it aloud to the class.

Day 04 :   2.   Discuss how each group has resolved the problem in their story.

The performance of this story is a unique experience for the children. They become a part of the market area andadd to the atmosphere of the market. The actors talk to them during the performance to seek their involvement. African proverbs, jinglesgive them the feel of completely different culture. The popular word 'Jumbo' which means 'Hello' is the most used word among the kids. Now they are ready to read the book. They now possess the prior knowledge and have the context to make sense from the print.No wonder that the book is on high demand

On the final day, children are given an 8-pager book, to write their story. They also must draw pictures supportingtheir story. While children work in groups, they design a story book of their own. And later they read it to everybody as a team. Children first write the text of the story before bringing it on the book. And based on the book they have just seen; they draw their own pictures for their story book.

We have 30 such story books made by children. 11 out of 33 groups we worked with feel in a case like this, Police is the one who will help us find the child. Many a times children refused to accept the level of faith depicted in the story to be real. Though they liked the story, it was hard for them to imagine that the child lost in the market will be safe. Some children argued that this is possible only in the story and not in real life. In short, we got an opportunity to peep in the thought process of how children respond to the literature.

This example is only one of the many rich experiences we have gathered over the past 4 years. Apart from responding to the literature children have also undertaken tasks like, discussing stereotypes, comparing the stories different times and cultures, performing the story themselves. We have observed that children are attracted towards books because of this experience and even if their decoding skills are at primitive level, they strive to make sense from the books. This is important as the process of meaning making and enjoying the children's literature also helps to improve reading skills.

Conclusion :

The benefits of using children's literature in reading pedagogyare well known. However, in the context of motivating the tribal children to read books, the very idea of literature is unknown. The performance gives a sensory experience to the children even before they take the book in their hand and thus acts like a hook. It provides necessary prior knowledge and context to the children which critical in the process of meaning making. It creates an opportunity to work on higher order skills like, analysing the text critically and respond to it. This approach bridges the gap between the ones who can read and the ones who are struggling to read as the struggling readers too can participate in responding to the book. However, to achieve these benefits the actors need to play a dual role that of a performer and a educational facilitator. The directors too, need to understand the exact role of performance in the process so that they can creatively aid it. Over the past 4 years the concept of performing children's literature in Goshtarang has evolved to this level and we see it evolving every year to reach to the next horizons fast.

Youtube Link : https://youtu.be/-TwD3yz9jK0