

8 -11 January 2008



National Consultation for Theatre and Conflict

Ahmedabad



# Host Committee of NCTC

Mallika Sarabhai	DARPANA, Ahmedabad
Hasmukh Baradi	THEATRE & MEDIA CENTER, Ahmedabad
Manvita Baradi	GARAGE STUDIO THEATRE, Ahmedabad
S. D. Desai	Theatre Critic
Janak Dave	Theatre Teacher, Writer, Director, Thinker, Ahmedabad
Rajoo Barot	AHMEDABAD THEATRE GROUP, Ahmedabad
Aditi Desai	JASWANT THAKAR MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, Ahmedabad
Rajkumar Nagar	LOK KALA MANCH
Kabir Thakore	Writer, Director, Designer, Ahmedabad
Saumya Joshi	FADE-IN THEATRE, Ahmedabad
Dr. Navnit Chauhan	Teacher, S. P. University, V.Vidyanagar
Dr. Kiran Bhokari	Teacher, Drama Dept., S. P. University, V.Vidyanagar
Stalin K.	DRISHTI MEDIA COLLECTIVE, Ahmedabad
Mahesh Champaklal	Teacher, Performing Arts College, M.S. University, Vadodara
Vrindavan Vaidya	Teacher, Drama College, Guj, Uni., Ahmedabad
Saroop Dhruv	Writer & Poet, DARSHAN, Ahmedabad
Fr. Cedric Prakash	Human Rights Activist, PRASHANT, Ahmedabad
Prasad Chako	ACTION AID, Ahmedabad
Wilfred D'costa	INSAF, New Delhi
Persis Ginwala	Development consultant, social activist, Ahmedabad
Hiren Gandhi	SAMVEDAN CULTURAL PROGRAM, Ahmedabad

## Dates

8-11 January 2008

## Venue

CEE Auditorium,  
Nehru Foundation for  
Development,  
Thaltej Tekra,  
Ahmedabad-54.

## Coordinators

**PERSIS GINWALA**  
098250 45495

**HIREN GANDHI**  
094261 81334

**WAQAR QAZI**  
094276 55189

Supported by

**NIYOS & OMC**



**n c t c**

**The 4-day consultation on  
“Theatre and Conflict” was conducted  
by eminent personalities from the field of  
progressive theatre movement & socio-politics**

### **The Personalities**

Prasanna  
Kamalmitra Chenoy  
Anil Choudhry  
Sanjana Kapur  
Rudraprasad Sengupta  
Arvind Gaud  
N.K. Sharma  
Mangai  
Himashu Rai  
Tripurari Sharma  
Irfana Majumdar  
Aditi Desai  
Suresh Sharma  
Mahesh Champaklal  
Kiran Bhokri  
Sanjoy Ganguly  
Manisha Mehta  
Neeta Kumar

### **and Their Deliberations**

- Current socio-political issues in India
- Role of theatre in socio-political conflict
- Modern Proscenium Theatre & Conflict
- Progressive and development oriented theatre & conflict
- Strength & Limitations of Street Theatre in Present Scenario
- Theatre of the Oppressed & Present Conflict Scenario
- Non-formal theatre training and socio-political conflicts
- Formal theatre education and socio-political conflicts
- How formal theatre education can address present socio-political conflicts in syllabus





## National Consultation on Role of Theatre in Socio-Political Conflicts

This consultation is basically a platform of dialogue about theatre and socio-political conflicts. It is a dialogue between theatre artists, activists and socio-political thinkers and activists. Theatre students and young theatre artists are the main focal group.

This event is an experiment in the direction of making it an annual event based on realities of theatre and conflicts. It hopes to bring to centre stage the darker realities of life in India and to try and find solutions for betterment and change.





## Background

Theatre, evolving at the dawn of human civilisation out of the early language and enculturation process, today seems to be distancing itself from human lives and societies. The harsh reality is that it now wields very little influence on mainstream society.

The journey of modern theatre in India started about 6 decades back. The post-1930s decades were characterised by the national struggle for independence, resistance and movements against social and cultural discrimination, and the struggle for gender equality. It helped 'identity politics' to find a direction and ignited 'class-consciousness' among masses. Modernity was its main motto.

But it has got derailed from its agenda of highlighting people's issues since the 70s. Why? What led to this? Is theatre itself responsible for it? Or are there larger socio-political and economic realities behind it?







### **Why this event?**

- 1.To look for the reasons for the derailment of Modern Indian Theatre from its goal of modernising Indian society
- 2.To initiate a nationwide process of sharing experiences about socio-political theatre
- 3.Try to find approaches to address socio-political conflict realities more effectively by theatre.
- 4.To initiate the process to develop common platform for national level socio-political theatre groups.

### **For whom is this event?**

- 1.Active socio-political theatre groups/activists/intellectuals
- 2.People's and political movements working on conflict issues
- 3.Theatre students and Young theatre artists

### **What will be the outcome?**

A nationwide platform and annual event of dialogue between socio-political theatre and socio-political conflicts.

## Progressive and Development-Oriented Theatre and Conflict



Progressive theatre lost its base because progressive people's movements and struggles lost its direction and ground. The process of globalisation of capital led to diversify 'Identity Politics' to conservative and fundamentalist forces. The State started to lose its control over the markets and democratic institutions started to wither away or became tools of free market oriented state machinery.

Development-oriented theatre is a child of development-oriented movements and institutions which are issue based. It is confined to issue-based struggles and campaigns. This type of theatre should be result oriented rather than process oriented. Because these struggles and campaigns have issue based vision, it is not a process of over all change.

At present the challenges are:

- 1) Theatre is a tool of progressive forces, movements and struggles. But it is also a medium of creative people and artists. It can also ignite people's movements and struggles. How can we release theatre from the clutches fundamentalist and reactionary forces?
- 2) How can theatre be truly made medium which can address real conflicts and people's realities?
- 3) How can theatre initiate progressive people's movement/s for equality, freedom and fraternity?
- 4) What will be the forms for that?





### **Strengths and Limitations of Street Theatre**

In the 19th century street theatre emerged as an 'agitprop' of the labour movement and while in 20th century it became a 'propaganda' tool for socialism. Now in the 21st century, the Globalisation era, the reality of the labourers and 'have nots' has changed. In 19th and 20th centuries street theatre played its role in successfully supporting the class struggles and people's movements. But it has always been dependent on movements, organizations and socio-political parties and has now become a propaganda tool for rudderless issue based movements and struggles.

- 1) Can we give street theatre a new life and make it a tool for people's movements and struggles?
- 2) Can we change street theatre into a medium of dialogue between oppressed, toiling masses and a tool for progressive movements? How?
- 3) What should be the effective strategies to make street theatre a language of labourers and toiling masses?
- 4) How can we make street theatre and its agitational characteristics more effective and develop movements of oppressed classes of society?
- 5) How can we develop the aesthetic values of street theatre?







### **Strength and Limitations of the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'**

After Bertolt Brecht's 'Epic Theatre', Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' broke the boundaries between the actor and the spectator. It tries to merge 'actors' and 'spectators' and make them into 'spect-actors'. In 1970s, in Latin-American people's Movements for Freedom and Equality, Boal developed this form of theatre. It came to India in the Globalisation, Privatisation and Liberalization era when class struggle is losing its ground. How can we make it into a medium of a realistic dialogue and a dialogue of 'Oppressed Communities and Class?'

It has potential as a platform for the toiling masses and for going beyond issue based movements and campaign but also a challenge for progressive forces and socio-political theatre practitioners to use it in a real democratic manner. Are we ready?

Can we make 'Theatre of the Oppressed' a bridge between oppressed communities and progressive movements? How? How can we ignite progressive people's movements through this format?



## Formal Theatre Education and Conflicts

Formal theatre education in India started in Nehru's Modern India. It was for the modern society and an education for modern theatre. But it has been institutionalised and confined to a profession and a lucrative career opportunity. In this process, it has lost its human face. In recent time, it is only technical and skill oriented education. Students of theatre are becoming the goods of the market, not cultural change agents. Can we change this reality? How?

- 1) How can we make formal theatre education more oriented towards social issues and realities?
- 2) How can we induce socio-political conflict realities into formal theatre education?
- 3) How can we bring theatre students face to face with the realities of the exploited masses?
- 4) How can we effectively expose the students of theatre to the realities of urban and rural areas?
- 5) Can we work out socio-political conflict realities and other related issues in the theatre education syllabus?
- 6) Can we create opportunities for theatre students to evolve theatre through non-actors (from toiling masses and oppressed communities)? How?



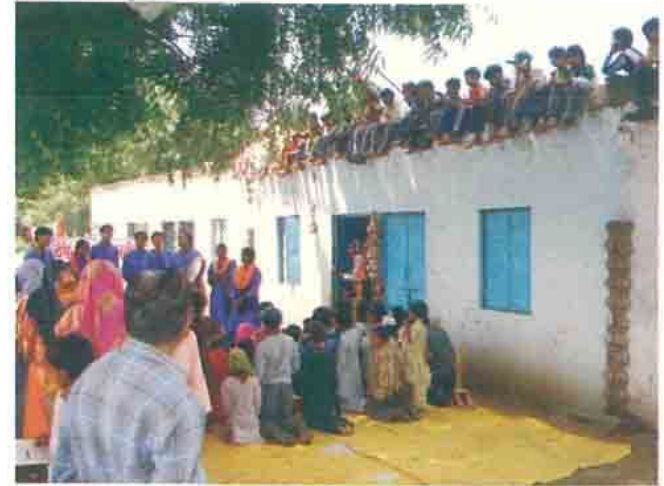




## **Non-Formal Theatre Trainings and Conflict Realities**

Non-formal theatre trainings are under the control of progressive organizations, development sectors, people's movements and government's human development programme institutions. Those are the barriers between creative ideas and realities of conflict affected masses in recent times because their structures and boundaries of establishment have very little space.

1. Can we break these barriers? How?
2. Can progressive people's movements and development agencies go beyond their structural barriers and boundaries? How?
3. Can theatre trainers work out strategies to bring toiling masses, oppressed and marginalized communities to fight for their human rights and provide new horizons of change to the progressive forces and developmental agencies?
4. What are the ways to equip non-formal theatre trainers to change conflict realities?



### **How can we link Progressive and Development Oriented Theatre Groups in India?**

Currently, the progressive forces and developmental agencies working on the ground with the marginalized and exploited communities have their own ideological and structural boundaries, which are very rigid and difficult to overcome. But in recent times they both have realized these limitations and barriers.

1. Is it possible to create common cultural platform for dialogue among them?
2. Could that platform be used for ideological debate within their boundaries and structural limitations and barriers? It seems nearly impossible but should we not start the process? Some of the socio-political platforms have proved it possible.
3. Can we debate contradictions of modernity, humanity and rationality on this platform?
4. Are we ready for the process-based, dialogue-based platform?
5. Can we make this a regular annual event?
6. Can we make the event a self sustaining event in the near future? How?









**हाँ,**  
**अंधेरों के दौर में भी**  
**गीत गाए जाएंगे**  
**- ब्रेख्त**



