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Annexure-I

ROLE OF THEATRE IN EDUCATION AND CREATING AWARENESS IN RURAL AND SEMI-URBAN AREAS OF INDIA

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Abstract:

There has never been any debate regarding theatre's importance in a child's development and one cannot deny the role of theatre in creating awareness. Theatre has been found to help learners develop critical abilities such as creativity, expressiveness, confidence, communication, collaboration, and language. Regular attendance at theatre classes also fosters the development of capacities such as empathy and comprehension, emotional and social management, rational thought, and higher cognitive abstraction abilities. Retention is also highly high in a drama context, owing to the nature of theatre approaches, which promote active engagement and active on-your-feet learning experiences. All of this incredible potential, however, is painfully constrained when contained inside the confines of a one-period-per-week lesson or a yearly performance. Only when drama is integrated into the regular fabric of a school's curriculum practice can these perks genuinely power learning in the 21st Century sense. From injustice to domestic violence, from substance abuse to poverty, from child marriage to adult education, our society is beset by a plethora of problems, and there is an urgent need for knowledge and reform. Since the dawn of time, art has served as a catalyst for societal transformation. Art has an impact on society by influencing attitudes, teaching ideals, and transcribing experiences over space and time. In this way, art is a form of communication. Theatre, is among the most popular forms of art, is claimed to be a potent vehicle of articulation that raises public consciousness about societal ills. As we view it, theatre in India has a rich history, legacy, and civilization. Thus, theatre as a mode of communication is critical in tackling contemporary India's socioeconomic concerns. The paper thus seeks to explore the potential of theatre as a learning tool for students as well as its role as a suitable medium for creating awareness especially in rural and semi-urban areas of India.

Introduction:

Drama as a form of communication is broad due to its pragmatic as well as creative aspects. It's theatrical to embellish conversation with expression. Dressing in particular styles is theatrical. Impersonating an activity is theatrical. Indeed, possessing such talents benefits an individual regardless of the path they take, particularly in an age when jobs are evolving into the unknown. There is a famous American proverb, "Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand." This seems to be true, especially in the case of learning and awareness. Children have a short attention span, which makes it even more challenging to get them to concentrate and remember things in today's environment, which is fuelled by technology. Educational institutions, on the other hand, have devised a solution to this problem. Drama is now being used in several institutions to teach. Not only is it being used in academic learning but also in creating awareness in rural and semi-urban areas. Teaching through theatre implies encouraging students to execute a play or a performance around a subject from their syllabus and presenting it in front of the community. The performers gain knowledge of the subject while rehearsing, and the audience gains knowledge from the skit. This approach aids student learning by allowing them to

participate in the learning process rather than simply witness it. Theatre for awareness on the other hand seeks to capture the attention of the spectator who may or may not be educated. Here theatre moves beyond the realm of academic learning and tries to impact the minds of the audience about common issues of everyday life such as electoral rights, health and hygiene, consumer rights, social evils such as dowry, bride-burning, alcoholism etc.

Use of theatre as an educational tool

Drama in learning has been around in some form or another for a long time. The concept, however, has mostly been confined to a test experiment. This concept's expansion has been stifled mostly due to a lack of conviction and administration. However, there are currently student-run clubs within institutions as well as independent organizations taking the lead in improving instructional practices. "We believe that the young minds should explore beyond the four walls, and performing arts is the apt medium for it. Our modules aim at experiential learning and using alternative education means to give students the opportunity to experiment with their ideas, explore their surroundings, experience new situations and express their viewpoints," says Prabhjot Singh, creative director, The Roots India.¹

Adopting theatre as a teaching tool will aid in the development of creativity. It will be beneficial for every learner if he/she is able to comprehend academic subjects and societal concerns using theatrical practices. Numerous colleges have diverse drama and theatrical communities that present plays, typically street plays, to raise awareness about a variety of social issues, from equality for women to environmental sustainability. When it comes to colleges, there is a life outside the classes. There are legitimate concerns about larger societal issues that intrigues a responsible youth. It is through theatre and its potential for communication that one is able to connect with and comprehend the situation. Having said that, it also needs to be mentioned here that drama as a teaching tool is no longer restricted to social themes only; it is gradually travelling into the classrooms. A multidisciplinary perspective provides a broad intellectual foundation for all forms of humanistic inquiry. Students develop their ability to read critically, write persuasively, and think broadly by examining themes, ideas, and approaches from the humanities and arts, as well as the social sciences. These abilities raise their classroom interactions and bolster their social and cultural understanding; they develop the tools essential to tackle the world's most complicated situations. Theatrical presentations encourage students to explore not just how to solve problems, but also which problems to solve and why, in the process preparing them for positions of responsibility and a life of commitment and service to the nation and humankind as a whole.

While many third-party organisations are bringing this change in colleges; schools themselves are taking the initiative. Shiv Nadar School has a whole theatre team that helps students understand the curricula through drama and run various programmes and courses. "When we help students prepare the plays, the course teachers are involved. So, we know that the students are getting the right information. We research about the subjects like an educator, and with the help of peer discussion, we to give them a push in the right discussion," says Debraj Dutta, member of the drama team. This method has proven to be successful, wherever applied, so far. With the help of college and school authorities, one can expect this method to take over mainstream teaching, and help students learn better.

¹ See Education, Drama and Theatre, *The Hindu*, 31st August 2019.

Schools are adopting the new educational movement, which introduced the notion of child-centered education and an integrated theory of learning. Different learning styles are considered, providing an equal opportunity for each and every kid to study and understand in his or her own unique way. This enables the educator to explore a broader and more diverse range of instructional options. Drama is a superb technique of instruction; it is "playful and enjoyable technique." It is a development of 'constructive play,' utilizing a variety of cerebral and physical activities. Indeed it can be called the most successful model of learning for developing communication skills, promoting positive self-esteem, assisting with decision-making, and increasing self-confidence, all of which are necessary for effective learning. Theatre can be easily woven and blended into all types of curriculum, age groups, languages, subjects and art forms. Drama and Teaching Math by Mark Wahl is a wonderful article in which Mark Wahl writes that "In my dreams the mathematical entities I was studying would begin to animate, Alice-in-Wonderland style, becoming people with mathematical traits"

Use of Theatre in Language Teaching

Drama encourages one to consider one's own capabilities. Engaging young English Language Learners in theatre requires them to apply their language skills by planning and organizing in teams, sharing existing drama work, focusing on their methods and accomplishments, and exchanging and discussing ideas, involving in role-play etc. Drama as an instructional tool aids in language development by expanding vocabularies, boosting fluency in oral communication, enhancing the ability to elucidate on the context of actions and words, and clearly conveying ideas and concepts. Additionally, it assists in the development of the capability to resolve issues in purposeful, unique contexts by fostering comfort with, and learning from, mistakes and trial and error, as well as the development of necessary abilities such as understanding, interpreting, and inferring when confronted with difficult material and stories. It instils a sense of enjoyment in the activities of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Additionally, theatre aids in the transmission of a message, the development of self-awareness, the exploration of issues, and the comprehension of the significance of cooperative learning. It encourages youngsters to consider their individual or social concerns, making it much easier for them to communicate more effectively in any setting. Showcasing actual experience as well as building their own make-believe world and more significantly, learning how to influence others and put themselves in other people's shoes, are all skills that may be gained through drama. Dramatization has the capacity to empower pupils and provide several prospects for them to feel proud of their work and improve their inter-personal skills. It instils in them a sense of duty, problem-solving, leadership, and organisational abilities, as well as the ability to express themselves freely. The numerous collaboration activities help learners improve language skills and decision-making. In general, it aids in the conquering of the (in) famous "stage fright."

Role of Teachers in Using Theatre as a Learning tool

Teachers who are receptive to new ideas and have a positive attitude can successfully use theatre as a valuable teaching tool. To accomplish this, the instructor must schedule time for theatre activities into the daily timetable and plan efficiently. Teachers who employed theatre extensively in their teaching, found their pupils being incredibly confident, articulate, and competent in both subject concepts and interpersonal skills. Hence, teachers are advised to participate in theatre workshops in

order to overcome their personal inhibitions and have a better understanding of the numerous nuances of theatre in order to use it effectively as a teaching tool. The teacher can readily grasp and recognize the child based on his or her role in the theatre, their body language, their expressions, and their understanding of life scenarios they have encountered. Theatre should be made a mandatory co-scholastic activity in schools, rather than an off-time club activity in which only a few students participate. The school library should be stocked with theatre-related literature and periodicals. The administration should promote teachers to take kids to see quality plays performed by professional theatrical organizations. Regular workshops for both teachers and students should be scheduled. In the classroom, a Dramatic Society can be encouraged.

Theatre Education Today

Humanities as a stream of study has been largely marginalised in India with generations of students being coaxed by well-meaning parents to opt for the more ‘respectable’ Science stream. To churn out more lawyers, doctors and engineers for the nation seems to be the penultimate goal of Indian parents. Even the clerical profession will do but woe befalls the unfortunate student who finds passion in drama or design. Her/his life is doomed for sure. This notion should be discouraged and teachers should guide students into a real understanding of contemporary theatre today and the importance of following one’s passion.

In colloquial parlance the term theatre is often interchangeably used with films. There is no specific difference between the two for much of India’s population till today. However a coterie of educated, young theatre enthusiasts are bringing about a change in theatre studies today. One must understand that theatre studies is a carefully planned syllabus designed to train individuals to inflate life into their imagination, requiring full engagement of their mind and body. CIFE – a professional association of independent sixth-form colleges in the UK – describes the A-Level Drama course as being ‘by no means a soft option’. “In Theatre, you begin with a void and create something. It requires daily rigour and practice as well as getting bored or finding yourself in a corner (metaphorically speaking usually) and using your imagination to get out of it,” says veteran actress Kalki Koechlin.²

According to a study by Fleming and Mills (1992), the VARK model represents the various learning styles of students – Visual (V), Aural (A), Reading and writing (R) and Kinesthetic (K). Since then, there have been countless revisions of this model but one can safely say, all students do not learn in the same way. Drama is an instrument that caters creatively to VARK. One can divide the makings of a play into four parts – the script that must be written, the sound and words that must be spoken, the acting and lights finished with props and costumes that are made. Without explanation, dots can be connected between drama and VARK.

Indian cities are gradually incorporating these techniques into their education system. Organisations like Theatre Professionals in Mumbai focus on ‘embedding drama-based learning’ in schools across the country. Having derived scientific evidence from DICE (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education), a two-year quantitative survey conducted in twelve EU countries analysing the efficiency of Drama in Education, *Theatre Professionals* also provide dramatic learning exercises and experiential pieces in their website to inspire educators.

Based in Bangalore Saras Priyadarshini is a Drama in Education practitioner that works in several schools in the city. Priyadarshini wants to accomplish three key goals: language improvement, moral values development, and confidence building. For the younger ones, sessions include Arithmetics

² See *Drama and Theatre Education in India: a Shared Journey*, Geff Readman.

and English courses conducted creatively using props and market settings. For students in eighth standard and higher, the emphasis is on developing students' English Learning, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) skills. "At times, I encourage students to sketch an object on the board in response to directions given by a classmate, which helps students improve their listening skills," said the teacher, who studied engineering before discovering her passion in DIE³. "I'm not interested in being the teacher who is obsessed with 'completing the curriculum'... Rather than that, adding some drama, interaction, and dialogue to the learning process makes it more enjoyable... When I scatter objects around the room and instruct the children to locate them, they respond with phrases such as 'on the table', 'under the chair', and so on. They have already mastered the prepositional lesson!"

Theatre as a Tool for Spreading Awareness

India boasts a plethora of legacy and culture, which is most palpable in rural India. The majority of societal ills confronting Indian society have their origins in rural India. Additionally, despite the tremendous expansion of electronic media in rural India, theatre continues to be the leading mass medium. As a result, this media plays a critical role in resolving social ills. The message being conveyed to the target audience must be well and structured. It should compel rural viewers to consider and understand the issue. Additionally, it is critical to use an acceptable mode of communication that is compatible with the audience's interests. Feedback is necessary to determine the effectiveness of theatre communication in addressing social ills.

In this area, Theatre for Development (TFD) can be a sort of participatory theatre that invites improvisation and audience participation, or it can be fully scripted and staged with the audience watching. Numerous TFD productions combine the two. Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" is a form of community-based theatre. Since the 1970s, when the notion of Theatre for Development gained popularity, professionals and community engagement actors have utilized it in its traditional functions of public awareness, community empowerment, out-of-classroom education, entertainment, motivation, pedagogical promotion, and problem-solving for community development. TFD, as a qualitative evaluation tool, is the act of gathering and utilizing qualitative data about a community development project in order to create live performances that aid in the assessment of overall accomplishments. TFD as a tool is not only about live performances, but also about the intricate steps that lead up to them. It views audience members as co-facilitators of the entire learning process, rather than as consumers of a finished output. Generally, in TFD, audience members are not *spectators*, but *Spect-Actors* who make a significant contribution to the process's success.

Often, theatre is viewed solely as a source of amusement. However, theatre can be so much more than sparkly costumes and gorgeous music; it is frequently the ideal medium for educating audiences about contemporary social challenges and inspiring change in society.

Generally, communication consists of a sender and one or more recipients. However, unlike traditional modes of communication, theatre communications involve two or more senders. The content designed for the audience requires at least two levels of coding and decoding. Thus, the sender-I, i.e. the author of the theatre theme, should consider the comprehension levels of both participants and spectators. Theatre in education emerged in direct reaction to the demands of both theatre and schools, and has attempted to utilize the skills and inventive capacity of theatre in the

³ Drama In Education

service of education. When combined with the aforementioned paradigm, the intended effects will be achieved.

As with any other medium, the theatre medium has a number of advantages for distributing knowledge to the public, particularly the rural masses. The majority of societal ills confronting contemporary India must be tackled in rural regions, and the ideal tool for this is theatre. The succeeding proposals may be examined for effectively using theatre to inform and educate rural populations. Municipal governments and local authorities are responsible for funding artists and promoting this medium. Street theatre has been shown to be extremely effective. As a result, appropriate motivation is sought at all ranks. All involved units at universities around the country should be assigned the responsibility of providing performances in rural areas as part of their academic curriculum. Under the National Service Scheme (NSS) at all institutions, street theatre performances aimed at teaching rural populations about social ills should be encouraged and promoted. It is obvious that theatre has faced a significant threat from numerous other media. Within this context, revolutionary new projects utilizing both theatre and new media solutions need to be developed.

Conclusion

In India, drama has indeed been utilized to highlight social injustices, advance political and social reform, and effect various societal changes. The term "theatre" in this context refers to activist and grass-roots organizations, as well as government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and socially conscious theatre companies and people. The organizations that deal with Dalits, girls, youngsters, sex workers, and other underprivileged communities all qualify as social justice theatre practitioners. The origins of a theatre dedicated to addressing social injustices may be traced back to the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which was founded on May 25, 1943. This institution used theatre and other kinds of art to promote socioeconomic and political awareness. They were the first to incorporate traditional forms and recruit folk artists, recognizing that the people already possessed effective performing idioms. IPTA made extensive use of the advantages of theatres as a means of disseminating information in a country with poor literacy and a large population. IPTA has relied heavily on street theatre, which is a low-cost and immediate method of reaching India's illiterate. While IPTA emphasized rural performances, the Indian government supported folk artists financially and via other types of patronage. The objective was to incorporate specific social messages into their repertoires. The administration's development program was entirely centred on education, birth control, healthcare, and the construction of pit latrines, among other national concerns. Around the 1980s and 1990s, a growing number of NGOs, non-partisan activist societies, and grass-roots organizations throughout the nation chose to establish street theatre as a tool for social change.

Throughout the history of Indian theatre's attempt to address social ills, a perception has persisted that folk forms are ideally adapted to communicating with the masses. . In India, local organizations, initiatives supported by the government, and other associations such as IPTA have taken a great deal of initiative in solving societal ills. However, it may be asserted that the potential of theatre as a medium for disseminating information about societal ills has been underutilized. All stakeholders should make an initiative to boost this medium as a means of resolving social ills in Indian Society and also to safeguard it from moving into oblivion.

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Annexure-II



3rd World Clean Environment Summit

Hosted by: Department of Botany, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi
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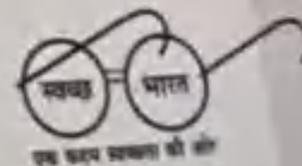
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A new theatre in the city: Fouzia Dastango and the revival of *Dastangoi*

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Abstract:

Dastangoi is an oral Urdu storytelling tradition; it has the dastango or storyteller whose voice is his main artistic tool. *Dastangoi* originated in Persia and travelled to Delhi and other parts of India, with the spread of Islam. It reached its pinnacle during the sepoy mutiny of 1857, when a number of Dastangos migrated to Lucknow, and popularized the art form in the city. Popular among all classes in Oudh, it died for a while with the demise of Mir Baqar Ali in 1928, to be only revived in 2005. The earliest reference in print is a 19th-century text chronicling the adventures of Amir Hamza titled *Dastan-e-Amir-Hamza*. Indian poet and Urdu critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and his nephew, writer, director Mahmood Farooqui, played significant roles in its revival in the 21st century. Buried deep in Old Delhi's decrepit homes and ancient walls are a bouquet of legends that is being revived and given a fresh lease of life by Fouzia Dastango, the first female Dastango of the country. In the staging of her art her voice and her narrative is her main tool. She does not use any audio-visual aid or music. She uses uncountable modulations to convey the nuances of human emotions and transports her audience to the world of tales. Featuring in her performances are works of Urdu writers such as Ashraf Subohi Dehelvi, Ismat Chughtai, Intizar Hussain and others. The paper thus seeks to reflect on the works of Fouzia Dastango and in the process gain valuable insights into the interconnections of this Urdu story-telling tradition from Persia with city theatre in India.

Keywords: storytelling, theater, Dastangoi