

Workshop in Kolkata by Frederic Devesa

Sunday, 15th of October, the Air India plane lands at the Kolkata airport. We should have arrived with British Airways almost 10 hours before but due to the London smog and the British paranoia, we have missed our connection flight. We could say, anyway, with 10 hours delay we have arrived.

We have come to India to follow a training on Theatre of the Oppressed, to participate to a festival international of Theatre of the Oppressed and to assist to the creation of the Indian national conference of Theatre of the Oppressed. To be very precise, my wife is doing Theatre of the Oppressed since more than two years and I am accompanying her. I have already assisted to Theatre of the Oppressed performances but I have never played. I am an absolute beginner.

Sanjana and Peter have come to the airport to welcome us. It is very comfortable to be welcomed after a long and unplanned trip. We are so tired...

I have met Jana Sanskriti one year ago in Paris. A week after the International Festival of Theatre of the Oppressed organized in France, the Jana Sanskriti was performing a last time in the 'théâtre de l'Épée de Bois'. My first experience with the Jana...

Today, he welcomes us to his home. The Jana Sanskriti Center is located in a small village named "Badu", 10 kilometers from Madhyamgram, a city in the suburbs of Kolkata. About one hour driving from the big city...

Jana Sanskriti center, 5 pm, Julian welcomes us, followed by Sanjoy and Sima whose house is next to Jana's one. The welcome is very warm as if we were friends or even more, from the same family visiting after a long period of separation.

A lot of people have already arrived to Badu. We meet people from all over the world, from thirteen or fourteen countries. Some of the participants are in India for 2 weeks or more, but most of us are just arriving, after a long and sometime difficult trip. We introduce each other sometime in French, most of the time in English and occasionally in Spanish... We will have so many things to share but first we have to know a little bit each other. During three weeks we will live most of the time together, all together during the workshop and the meals, in small groups when sleeping. We will sleep in Madhyamgram at Ananda Bhavan in a family house just in the center of the city. Indian life will take us by surprise, at 6 am with quite loud music the first morning. But we will very soon sleep very well as the working days will be very hard and we will be a little tired...

Tuesday, 17th of October, after one day of rest and acclimatization to the temperature and humidity, the training is about to start. We are in India since 2 days. Everything is new. Colors, smells, sounds...

Monsoon is finished and weather is very warm and humid. Fall was very warm when we lived our country but here it is more than thirty degrees and more than 90% of humidity. Every movement makes me sweat... A new sensation amongst all the ones that we have to discover...

The training has started in the forest, in a glade, first with a lot of games, then with short techniques... I could not imagine before that we could work outside. However, it seems to me

very natural to work amongst the trees and the birds. The first impressions...
- the process is as important as the product!
- "the relation" is the most important, nothing can be build without establishing first the relation between the people.

As everything we do is based on feelings and emotions, it seems also very important to build a true relationship based on sincerity and trust.

Everything starts with a game or a song or a dance. It is so much easier to learn when it is funny.

We spend a lot of time together, having breakfast and most of the meals all together in the courtyard of the Jana center, as a consequence we have time to discuss. However, as all of us do not speak the same language, people use to group with people they already know or who speak the same language. As the days passed, this also tends to change. Of course the main topics that we discuss is India, Theatre of the Oppressed, what we do in our life and Jana Sanskriti. What has impressed us (I guess I am not the only one), at the very first, is the kindness of all the people from the Jana. Of course, we went from very far countries, we were a majority of occidentals, but I am sure that Sanjoy, Sima, Sujoy, Sanjana, Soto and the others are just so kind. They care every one of us like children. It was really amazing! This nice feeling of friendly relationships was also shared by most of the people who have been discovering Mahdyamgram by night. We were very lucky that the Kalipuja, one of the most important festivals for Hindus, took place at the same time that the workshop. Every night after having dining all together, some of us who slept in Madhya

mgram get the opportunity to enjoy first the preparation and then the feast itself. More than the colors and the beautiful statues of Kali, as well as the temporary temples built in every street, the nicer feeling came from the people themselves and their need to communicate with us. Zidane seems to be the most famous French person in the world!

Theatre of the Oppressed was new for a lot of people. I thought I could be the only one who never practices but actually it is not the case. People are coming from so many horizons. Irini was a Greek actress living in Spain, Momo and Angèle have retired, Chloé is French and actress, Céline is French too and theatre director, Peter is the first German/Finnish who is writing a thesis on Theatre of the Oppressed... Antonio and Noellia are coming from Barcelone, Rosa from Madrid, Bibiana from Colombia, Thelma from south of Portugal, Mariana is from Argentina but is living in Spain, they all have a good experience of Theatre of the Oppressed, Birgit and her cosmopolitan group also know very well Theatre of the Oppressed. For the three young Indian trainees, Theatre of the Oppressed is also knew but they will never seem to be lost in this melting pot.

I used to work within groups, either professionally or in the small mountaineering association that I lead for sixteen years. But, it is the first time that I have experimented or perhaps experienced is a better word, the creation in a group with no established leader. All the members of the group work together on the same basis. I have found the experience of course interesting but most of all very hard. It looks like it is difficult to be in a creation process and at the same time being able to compromise and listen each other... difficult to be focused on his main interest and to be open and able to share. As I was a beginner in Theatre of the Oppressed and I have never done any Theatre; I have less participated than observed. Possibly a way to receive more than to give... I do not know. I have perceived all the tensions between members of the group, I guess like everyone, but I thought also that the result of our work was less important than the different

emotions that were filling the group. As usual, when the construction process is very hard, people are also very happy when the work is done. It is of course what has happened in this case.

Another topic was totally new for me, the power of images. I already learned and knew that good images are always better than long texts. And I mainly experienced this in a professional context. But, I never imagined that it was possible to show and even transmit to a public our emotions through images, most of the time through fixed images. I learned that to come to a play from a simple idea or situation of oppression, the images are the more natural way of expression. Build an image, stop, observe, comment and improve the image. Then from the first image to the last one, adding artistic aspects that humanize the situation, a play is born, naturally. The power of the images... the less you talk, the more you see...

Everything looks so natural and comes together almost easily but I could not imagine it during the workshop. I did not know what an oppression was, I mean technically. The difference between an oppressed person, who can change her/his situation, and a victim, who cannot act by her/hisself, was not so clear for me. I have learned it. And it was not so easy.

India is the most contrasted country that I have ever seen. It is the first time that I have seen so many different things, views and people in a so short time. I had never been so tired after one week of vacation and to be complete, I have never lived so many amazing situations in so few days. Of course this week has changed my life.

Why to go in India to follow this type of training? I see two main reasons. The first one is that Jana Sanskriti is one of the sources of the Theatre of the Oppressed with Augusto Boal's team. The second main reason is that changing the point of view changes the things that you see. And from that point of view India offers a million of good points of view.

Romanticizing the optimism by Mariana Vilani

“When I dream of an International movement of Theatre of the Oppressed, I feel that we are responsible to humanize the human being.” Sanjoy Ganguly

On the 22nd October 2006, a spectators rally was organized in Calcutta by Jana Sanskriti. They brought together more than 12,000 people, coming from far off villages throughout west Bengal to show their support, respect and gratitude to the first group to practice Theatre of the Oppressed in India, demanding that the means of artistic production are returned to the people and celebrating the birth of a new national organization that has chosen to use TO as a political key for social change.

The people that were present had traveled between 4 and 12 hours to be there, coming by boat, train, bus and foot, to participate in the march and then return home to their daily lives. The majority of them were women, showing the results of many years of Jana Sanskriti's hard work for women's liberation.

Between the 17th and the 21st of October, a workshop was organized by J.S, in which 46 people from 13 different countries participated. The participants were also all there to give support and solidarity during the march.

We (the participants) waited to join the end, with tears of emotion, applauds and songs. There were two lines of people, one behind the other. It was amazing to see that quantity of people passing in front of us.

At the end of the line, the group of foreigners joined the march led by Augusto Boal (who traveled especially to be part of this event), along with Sanjoy Ganguly, director of Jana Sanskriti and his wife, Sima Ganguly, the main actress of the group.

We marched through the streets of Calcutta, united in one voice: Long live Jana Sanskriti, Long live Forum Theatre, Long live the art of the people!

We walked for several hours under the sun till we got to a big field where the act took place.

There we met the mass of Jana Sanskriti's spectators and we sat together to hear the speeches of several delegates.

Augusto Boal gave an inspiring speech where he emphasized the historical moment that we were living, "when something that has never happen before, happens for the first time. That something that never existed is born... men and women who believe in creating a new society, come here to declare that what they have promised, what they want, what is needed, is possible... You came here to shout out loud, that is possible to create a new world where all of us can be happy, without oppression, where every human being can live in a human way "

Two delegates of the group of foreigners read a document in which we expressed our support and respect for their invaluable work.

The presence of the women was represented by one of the women teams of J.S singing a beautiful song and Sima Ganguly speech.

After more speeches of different delegates of J.S teams and politic organizations, the act was closing with Sanjoy speech and the group of foreigners singing a song on the stage.

I look into myself searching for the words that could express how deeply this experience has touched us, and still I cannot structure a whole sentence, although these words come along: People's art. Power. Discussion. Relation. Struggle. Possible. "Democratize the reality". "Humanize the humanity".

Just one last thought about this: can you imagine a spectator rally like this one, in your own country?

Trip to the village

Two days later the workshop participants got in two buses early in the morning to go to Digambarpur, a little village in the Sunderbans, in the Bengali forest, where J.S start the activity more than 20 years ago.

After almost 5 hours in bus plus 20 more minutes in rickshaws we arrived to a beautiful place surrounded by all the different shades of green imaginable. The excitement was greater than our tiredness. We walked for about 2 km when we saw a group of people from afar and as we got

closer we realized that they were waiting for us. At the entrance of the Mukta Mancha they received us with a song, giving a little bunch of flowers and painting the “bindi” on our foreheads. This welcome brought out our first tears.

They gave us some time to recover ourselves from the journey (and the emotion) and then we had the opportunity to take a look around the place.

In the kitchen, eight women were making chapattis for us. The J.S team with Sima herself served us a lovely lunch.

Later the Brazilian team played some songs and we all sang together and then we started to walk to the stage that was around 500 meters away. It was a circle drawn on the ground and marked by bamboo sticks in the usual J.S style.

The main team of J.S performed the forum play “Shonar Meye” (The Gold Girl), which talks about the situations of women before, during and after marriage.

Afterwards, the participants of the workshop showed the forum plays that we created during our time there. The interventions of the spectators were limited to two for each play due to the short time we had to be there.

Six plays were showed, the oppressions worked were the violence of gender, racial discrimination, the workers abuse, the authority abuse, and the oppressive relationships within the family.

The participation was active and spontaneous even though the plays were in different languages. One of the most important reasons that I believe it helped, was the richness of symbolism gained during the workshop. Symbolism that, unfortunately, we are not very used to see in the European forum theatre.

In this village of experienced spectators, sometimes it seemed unnecessary to include the role of the joker. In one occasion, for instance, a woman shouted: “ Stop!” before the model had finished.

Sima told me later that the attitude of that woman was very meaningful, precisely because she is a widow and widows are rejected by Indian society. I believe this is one of the results of the constant intervention of J.S in the villages, returning self-confidence to people, opening places wherethey can discuss, relate with each other, find their own voices and finally act politically.

We were all singing and dancing together, when the time to say good-bye suddenly came.

We all shared the last hugs.

An old woman couldn't stop saying: “thank you” while she was hugging me intensely for a long time. Even though I don't know her name and I don't even know if I will ever see her again, I clearly know that it was a very powerful moment in my life that I will surely never forget. I thank Her and trough Here the villagers of Digambarpur. I celebrate their struggle, strength and power, their constancy and all the love they gave to every single one of us.

And finally, all my gratitude to Jana Sanskriti for giving us the opportunity to have shared that unforgettable experience.

To Envision means to See!

by Birgit Fritz

“There are some days like today, when something that has never happened before, happens for the first time, that something that has never existed, is born. This today is one of those wonderful days. **Men and Women**, who believe in creating a new society, have come here, to declare, that what they have promised, that what they want, what is needed, is possible.”

(Augusto Boal in the beginning of his speech addressing the many thousands of people who gathered after an incomparable SpectActors' Rally at Wellington Square, Kolkata, 22nd of October 2006)

Jana Sanskriti's Mukthadara II Festival has made the 22nd of October 2006, the day of the SpectActors' Rally in Kolkata, a mile stone in the history of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The most quoted statement during the whole festival and certainly that very day, was Antonio Machado's, *caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar*, in its shorter English translation – ways are made by walking!

“Something that never happened, happened for the first time.“ It was what we could feel, not only emotionally, but intellectually as well; we could grasp the meaning of being in the right place, at the right time. Meaningful being!

The participants of the workshop, the visitors to the festival, the convention, we, the international guests, practitioners, who had come to see, to learn, to support, to witness a most spectAc(t)ular phenomenon.

Quite a few of us said, that they will never forget that day, that being part of the Mukthadara experience, lives changed, attitudes, understanding of the Theatre of the Oppressed Movement. Ideas have become alive, visions proved true, suspicions were confirmed. TO can actually change the world around us, as we also change when practising this art.

The preparation that went into the organisation of the SpectActor Rally we might not have been able to comprehend. How and with what strength, optimistic energy and collective spirit, the network of TO groups that Jana Sanskriti represents, could pull off a rally with such a breathtaking number of participants, disposing of the humble means they have, we do not know. We suspect it has to do with endurance, love and conviction.

During the days before the 22nd the organisational team was confronted with numerous phone calls, beaurocratic barriers and administrative chores, while at the same time catering to the visitors, preparing the convention, covering the media work. A lot of patience and good strategy was applied until in the last moment all permissions were granted and things could, also officially, move ahead, when in reality they had to be prepared a long time ahead.

Jana Sanskriti Headquarters in Badu near Kolkata, as we have seen, disposes of two telephones, a computer, a car and a motorcycle. How could it all be accomplished? The answer is, the answers are – the PEOPLE!

Communication between Jana Sanskriti members is one of the miraculous things of this world. It must be something close to perfect. When one is not there, the other go on doing his or her work, people jump in, they ARE one. Be it act, sing, play the drums, teach, cook, drive, discuss, solve problems, answer questions, show the way, translate texts, make announcements, together they do it all. They have a common cause and have lived an improvement in their lives through the work they do. And most obviously, this driving force behind their commitment, is what unites and strengthens them enormously - an essential lesson!

On the 22nd of October instead of 5.000 expected SpectActors, more than 12.000 came.

Seventy percent of the walking spectActors were spectActresses. An enormous gathering. Men in part had stayed at home looking after the children, but also, protecting the houses, as it happens, that empty slum dwellings, are being destroyed by the forces of the State, without offering alternatives.

For European standards it was a most quiet march. The marching was the message, the posters, the silence, some songs and women blowing the conch shells. In India, people march in lines, one person behind another. There were two parallel ones, both seemed endless.

They were headed by Augusto Boal and his team. Augusto was flying, at least his hair was! The sun not only shone from the sky but also from his and all eyes around. It was harvest day, as he later said.

The rally went right through Kolkata, right through the madness of its traffic, the astonishment of its inhabitants. We, the international guests, from at least 14 different countries, that I can recall, were awaiting the end of the line and then marched along, singing a song that we had been taught by Sima and Soto the nights before. Oh, shobai mile jot badhi re ay – let everyone unite and come!

At the moment of learning the song, it had been a strange thing to do (for me), at least for some moments. It made me think of primary school and the anthems we had had to learn, and some old grudges were awakened, at this event so far away from my childhood traumas. It was a confusing moment (whose words do I learn, why do I sing them, what do they mean, can they also be my words ???).

Then, at the moment of seeing the spectActors walk and us, being able to contribute voices that might hopefully have been understandable to them taking into consideration our accents and pronunciation, to also acoustically show our support, it did not only make me shiver and laugh at the same time, but also move and shift all I had ever thought about solidarity with so-called developing countries, a term that I would like to have replaced by the one of majority world. We are the odd ones out. At least the ones who come from the so-called first world, the minority world. And I mean everywhere not only in India.

The posters made the following statements and also asked some questions:

**We want to analyze society, and therefore art is our friend.
Since the beginning of civilization, art has been with us (the people). Who took it away from us?**

Is art only for the elites?

So that we, the working class people, cannot enter into the world of thought, art has been taken away from us.

Not necessarily issues that people might expect to be raised from peasants living in small villages. We were told that the Indian media covered the event to a satisfying extend and that the rally got the attention it deserved!

It is not easy to write about what we have witnessed, because I am sure, there were so many things we did not see, we did not hear, or even if we did, we might not have understood it all. We knew that the people came from afar, many on trains, boats, busses, even walking or a combination of all of the above. Some could not make it, because their means of transport gave up on them, or the way was too far. Some of them had been told that they should stay at home, because they lived too far away and to come such a long way for only one day didn't make sense. Nevertheless they wanted to come to the city and to support the movement on that special day, being prepared to make the sacrifice.

We could see, that they acted as a group, a movement, which made us very aware of how individualistic our societies, our lives often are. We were challenged by the big questions of life, maybe not always visibly but inside of us, the earth was shaking to different extends, for many of us.

Some of us now sign their emails with: WE ARE ONE! For some this seems too good to be true! But yet it is! Sanjoy's definition of what is the human being, in a workshop in Austria, has been one of oneness, love and protest! So there is space for all of it.

We were told that many of the spectActors had also scenes prepared, they brought with them to the city to show, but because there were so many people, they couldn't present them.

At the end of the rally, there were speeches, by Augusto, by Sanjoy, by representatives of mass organisations and intellectuals who support Jana Sanskriti and also a declaration of solidarity of the international group. The text, the piece of paper, got lost, but the message remains:

We want to declare our solidarity to you. In our many countries we want to fight all forms of fascism and oppression. We want to talk about oppression and name it where we see it, and not to be lured into passivity by half-hearted democracies. Jana Sanskriti is a great example and a wonderful teacher for all of us. We strongly admire your commitment, your strength, yours beliefs. We are glad to be here today, we thank you and we applause you!

What a day!

The question of solidarity is the one that I had already taken with me to India and I also brought it back home again. How can we live this solidarity, how will it change our lives?

Right now, Jana Sanskriti is fighting intensely for and with the land rights movement. They are up against a monstrous enemy, globalization.

We need to keep our promise; we need to understand that we really are all one. If we don't the ones will win, the ones who produce luxuries with slave labor, steal the land of the farmers who work it, who export old technology, risky factories to other countries, - far away! We are not far! This is the first lie we have to challenge. And in India, for the blink of an eye, we did.

Now we have to keep the fire burning, we have to raise the child. And it takes the globalised village to do it. We can also find our strength. It is essential.

The end.

Ps: And we will try to support the Jana Sankriti Bondhu network and hope it will grow to ensure the continuous work of this unique people's movement and its founders. For more information, please contact Julian Boal or Birgit Fritz.

A short report of an unexpected encounter.

Digambarpur. Sunderbans. The delta forest in Bengal. Kolkata.

"I have always known that in the dialectic between insoluble problems on the one hand and the attempt to surmount them on the other lies the key to human development."

(Sanjoy Ganguly in a letter written in 1985)

International Guests. Villagers. Jana Sanskriti SpectActors and SpectActresses. Mukta Mancha. The Open Stage.

Worlds colliding, on the 24th of October 2006 in Westbengal. What does it mean? What is the human potential of an event like this? Certainly it has been a day that i, and certainly many of us who were there, will never forget, a day that will always keep a question alive inside my head and heart.

The generosity of the visit, the hearty welcome, the spirit of a place, where for twenty years people have been trying to create a human society through the means of people's culture, people's theatre. A truly spiritual space in many ways. A truly intellectual place. A creative centre. How can we relate to each other? How can this relationship be a meaningful one, beyond the brief moment in time? This will be the question.

Within the wonderful Mukthadara II festival, there was also this one day, this one excursion for the international guests to the village where Jana Sanskriti started its unique work twenty years ago, looking to find the roots of urban slum dwellers' poverty in Kolkata[1].

Digambarpur. Home of Shoto and many others who hopefully we will meet again, one day. Rice fields, clay houses, betel leaves, ponds, almost a full moon night. Women in saris in all imaginable colours. Welcoming rituals. Flowers and conch-shells. Mukta Mancha, the open stage. The incredible strength of the people. The beauty of the moment, I believe is a powerful weapon.

Theatre of the Oppressed is an integral part of their village culture. They have made it alive, they own it, they live it their way. What a place!

An encounter like this, between that western crowd and those villagers should be impossible, according to globalisation, our magnificent enemy. We have nothing in common. We are worlds apart. Incomprehensible languages, ways of thinking, attitudes towards life, opportunities, riches. If we happened to get lost in India and by chance ended up in a village like this, we would feel as if on a different planet. The way we lived this day, it was like coming home. There are not many words to describe this event.

The schedule was that after our arrival, we were first presented a performance of Shona Meye, the most popular forum of the Jana Sanskriti main team, and then would perform the short forums that we developed during the workshop with Sanjoy at Badu. Before the big moment one of our actresses said how nervous she was, how thrilled and scared that what we had to show was not good enough. It was a big honour to be there, to be welcomed, to have the people of Digambarpur act out our scenes with us, fight with us on stage, for satisfying solutions to problems that we analysed during the international team's workshop days.

If this sort of communication is possible, if events like this can take place, then everything is possible. People will be stronger than their oppressors. From Jana Sanskriti we can learn how. It will take all the people and it will take a life time. But we cannot say it is impossible ever again. Because we were there.

And if, in the future, we are to tackle problems of this globalised world, when confronted with western cynicisms during workshops we teach, or projects we are to draft, this experience lives within us, it has the capacity of giving us the strength to believe in the humanization of us all.

Speech of KOLKATA

(Delivered by Augusto Boal at the grand opening party for the Festival of Theatre of the Oppressed during which the Indian Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed was created, on October 22nd, 2006, incorporating 37 popular theatre organizations)

by Augusto Boal

There are days when we wake up in the morning feeling happy because the sun is shining, trees are green and the sky is blue. Work of Nature.

There are days when we wake up in the morning feeling happy because we have created something new; we have been capable of transforming Nature. Those are the days of harvest when we reap the fruits of our labour. We have worked hard to make it happen and have understood that, to be citizens, it is not enough to live in society: we have to transform it. That is the work of human beings.

There are days, like today, when something we have long dreamt of, but has never existed, comes into being for the first time, announcing the Future: something is born to celebrate Life. This is one of those wonderful days. We are commemorating the birth of the Indian Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed

For the first time in the world, twelve thousand valiant women and men are gathered together on a beautiful sunny morning, having traveled hundreds of miles through the night – on buses, boats, carts, trains or even on foot – to celebrate a heroic and historical deed which is a work not of Nature, but of Humankind: they have come here to proclaim their condition of Artists – we are human beings, so we are Artists. They have come here to assume the power of theatre, which is the first human language.

Here, in this public place, there are dozens of popular organizations, thousands of individuals who represent more than one million human beings from sixteen states of India. Men and women who have discovered that the future is created today by each of our acts, each of our choices. The future is the product of our hands' travail, of our power, not the result of chance or hazard. They have discovered that the Theatre of the Oppressed is a useful tool to study the past and, in the present, to build our future, rather than waiting for it. Men and women who have decided to use theatre to transform this society into another that will bring us happiness and not suffering, joy and not servitude.

Theatre of the Oppressed gives us the right to speak our minds, and, using the power of Art, to invent solutions to our problems. Through theatre we discover that we are more capable than what we thought, able to free ourselves from our oppressions.

Jana Sanskriti, as Sanjoy Ganguly says, was founded twenty years ago as a small theatre group in a small community of West Bengal, and is now a movement that is expanding all over this enormous country. Here, in this public square, is the proof of that – twelve thousands proofs in front of our eyes. Jana Sanskriti is an example for all of us in our own countries.

Thank you, Julián, for having insisted that I should come to this meeting. Weeks ago you wrote me and said: "Father, prepare your heart!" And my heart beats strong, for sure, but it is prepared to see what I am seeing: this multitude of persons conscious of what they have done and are doing, aware of what they want to do and will do.

Thank you Sanjoy and Sima Ganguly, thank you all and each one of you who have made this national movement of Jana Sanskriti, all of you Indians and foreigners who are here to tell us that it is possible to transform the world, to make it a habitable place where we can all live together.

The Center of Theatre of the Oppressed of Rio de Janeiro, which, since the Festival of 1993 dialogues with Jana Sanskriti, came here to embrace you and to be present at the party which is for all of us. Thank you.

Muktadhara II

by Sujoy Ganguly

Jana Sanskriti was born in the remote hamlet and it spent the first phase of its life in the company of the folk artists. Thus the term 'mela' in relation to the influence of folk and rural culture happens to have been familiar to Jana Sanskriti from the very beginning. Then, the term mela signified togetherness, the performance of folk plays and songs, small shops and food stalls and the like. Now in the villages one sees the growth of bigger enterprises, and with it is noticeable a greater number of richer people. The political parties have adopted the culture of fascism. The hand of the villagers in the cultural structure of these melas is being lost and is now being replaced by the hands of the rich businessmen and political leaders. The character of the melas is

under going a change. Commercial theatres in Calcutta have become the life source of the rural melas. Earlier these commercial theatres in Calcutta were closer to the people in the rural areas but the increasing demand for capital has changed the mind set and perspective of even these groups. The accountability of these groups have now shifted from the people to the side of the investors of capital.

This is the reason Jana Sanskriti organizes their mela every year with the intention of facilitating the relationship between the people. When in the present globalization of the capital there is an attempt made to remove the existence of the “culture of many opinions” then standing utterly on the side of the opinions of many we claim and announce that we are completely for the globalization of thought, philosophy, human beings and humanity. Our concept of globalization is based upon the Sanskrit saying “*Basudhiva Kutum Bakum*” which primarily means “The Guest is God”, where the citizens of the world are united and related and not isolated from one another. Man over here is not a slave to selfish and materialistic thoughts. In order to create a world of not just beings but human beings we have come out with “many in opinions and together”. Even the last word regarding the means of livelihood of the people is being taken away by the state and its rulers. In this present economic and political culture (utterly fascist in nature) the collective desire of the majority of the people in this state is meaningless and disrespectful.

In the context of this present political situation this mela becomes a medium where many opinions can come together and engage themselves in dialectical relationship and many people can find a relationship among one another. That’s why the mela and its name is called Muktheadhara (“free flow”). This name is relevant from two perspectives – the first is to enable the free flow of many opinions and the second is to bring about a decentralization of art- its culture and its philosophy – from the hands of the elite and privileged sections of the society. Taken together Jana Sanskriti’s festival – Muktheadhara-II is a well-conceived political move.

For Jana Sanskriti, from the very beginning, acting was a necessity under taken for political activism. That is why the relationship between Jana Sanskriti and the other mass movements across India is very sincere, deep and full of meaning. Today particularly, the urban theatres are dreadfully far away from political activist groups. The accountability of these theatre groups is not to the people but, to the ruling party, the hands of the powerful political leaders of which they seek to strengthen. The desire to stay closer to power is so strong in them, that, they resort to continuously lying the matter away in order to not address the fascist ways of the political parties. In this context Jana Sanskriti felt that the combination of political activism and theatre of the oppressed is extremely vital and significant. This is why in the festival we witnessed the performance of those groups that are in reality, each one of them, a particular mass movement organization. One of India’s greatest mass movement leaders, Medha Patkar, had for this reason inaugurated the festival even though at the heart of it all was Augusto Boal, which was a very relevant factor. According to the Sanjoy Ganguly, founder of Jana Sanskriti, “ Theatre of the Oppressed today, has to embrace the activist movements if not, it shall drift further and further away from its main goal.” He further maintains that, “ there is a plot to make Theatre of the Oppressed a property of the elite sections so that the oppressed masses cannot use it as a tool to liberation”, thus in relation to this context, we presented a political statement and a way by having Medha Patkar to inaugurate the festival. In her inaugural speech Patkar mentions that political activist movements in India expect much from Jana Sanskriti: “For enabling the rationalized political intervention of the working classes in India, today theatre of the oppressed can become a powerful instrument- a weapon.”

Boal mentions in his inaugural speech that, “The work of Jana Sanskriti is important in various aspects.

First of all, this is a group which practices the best of Theatre of the Oppressed, whose aim is not only to understand reality but to transform it; not only to understand the mechanisms of oppression but to fight against them.

Second, Jana Sanskriti starts from a very real conflict but, through that particular story - like, for instance, a girl forced to marry against her will -, we understand not only the family but the whole social and political structure where that particular problem happened in that small village, or is happening in the whole country.

Third, Jana Sanskriti knows that the aesthetic presentation is also a language and is a necessary part of our capacity to learn: their shows are beautiful.

Fourth, Jana Sanskriti understands that Solidarity is an essential part of Theatre of the Oppressed, which is an Ethical System, and they establish a solidary relationship with the populations for which they work.

Fifth, Jana Sanskriti is no longer a group, it is a National movement. Jana Sanskriti has integrated Theatre of the Oppressed in the lives of hundreds of people, every time more and more.

Jana Sanskriti is an example for all of us. »

Performances in the festival were done by the Delhi Shramik Sanghathan (which is Jana Sanskriti's Delhi wing also in a way), Sarvahara Jana Andolan, Malla Bhoom Adivasi Sangram Manch(JS wing Orissa), Bundelkhand Adivasikrishan Majdoor Sanngathan, Baghel Khand Adivasi Kisan Major Sanghathan , JS Udaypur Tripura, JS Samanyay Shakha, and this apart there was the Ashtar theatre from Palestine, TDU-Vienna and CTO Rio.

There were mostly two themes that received major importance in the festival – displacement was one and the other was the domestic and social oppression on women. The wave of urbanization and industrialization that are being made to rise as a result of globalization, is causing massive displacement. This very development paradigm was questioned through the performance of the Delhi and Maharashtra groups. Development or destruction? This was the main question that was put forth to the spectators. On the one hand in the name of development people are being evicted from their slums where their place to stay is not fixed and permanent, when these slums originated in order that urban house holds could be made. As a saying in Bengali goes, “friend at the time of need and enemy after that”. This is the culture of the government and the neo rich classes. All this was talked about in the forum performed by the Delhi Jana Sanskriti team which drew good intervention and discussion.

On the other hand in the name of creating Special Economic Zones the governments of various states are implementing land acquisition act, which was passed by the British in 1894. By applying this law the state is evicting a large number of peasant's and workers from their livelihoods. But the industrialists will be given all kinds of opportunities. The electricity, water, land will be given to the industry by the state and the industry doesn't have to pay even the taxes of importing and exporting their products outside the country. In one hand there will be real estate growing, shopping malls and entertainment industry will take its place and the poor villagers on the other hand will be evicted from their livelihood. This was the subject of the forum performed

by the Sarvahara Jana Andolan (they also work as Jana Sanskriti Maharashtra). Is this development or destruction? The forum of JS Orissa dealt with the problem of land acquisition in Kalinnagar Orissa. The land was acquired against the will of the farmer's for the industry. In their forum too the same question was addressed.

The coordination team of Jana Sanskriti performed a play called "Where We Stand", which highlighted the undemocratic relationship that exists between the party leaders and the people.

Bundelkhand Adivasi Kisan Jana Sanghatan and Baghel Khand Adiasi Kisan Sanghstan (both from Madhya Pradesh) performed a forum only on how the poor people are being worst affected by the public distribution system run by the government.

The presence of patriarchy is some thing we find all throughout the world and it also exists in places where capitalism is very developed. It existed even in the so-called socialist states. In this festival Ashtar theatre from Palestine(west Asia), CTO Rio De Janeiro (south America), Austria CTO Vienna (Europe), JS Delhi (south east Asia) performed forums on the oppression on women inside the family and in the work places. In all the forums performed by all the groups of the different continents, the spectators were involved in a very serious discussion all through out – the people in Calcutta and from other parts of the country did not view this oppression on women as something very alien even though the expression of the oppression differed.

Apart from Jana Sanskriti's own units all over India and the groups that they have trained all over the country there was the participation of 32 different mass organizations from 12 different states in India. More than 300 hundred delegates saw the festival; they stayed together and debated together. Besides, participants from 14 different states were also a major source of delight and significance.

The festival is going to be a landmark in the history of Indian theatre. Workshops, spectators rally, forum theater festival, seminars and the formation of the Federation of Theatre of the Oppressed India – all that were a part of the festival. Yet last but no the least the festival was organized without the financial support of any sponsor or any institutional support that kind.